CREOLIZATION AND MODERNIZATION AT THE PERIPHERY:

The case of the Q'eqchi'es of Guatemala

Hans Siebers

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For Myrna

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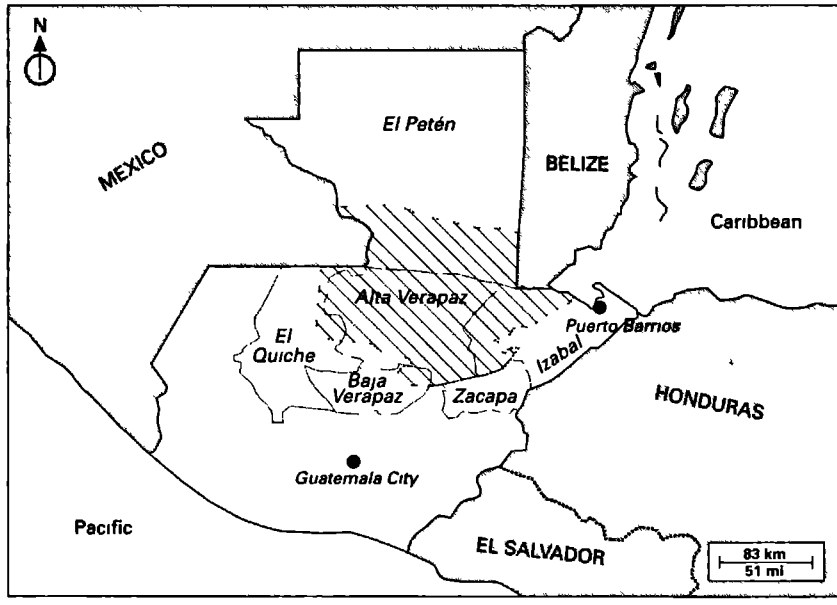

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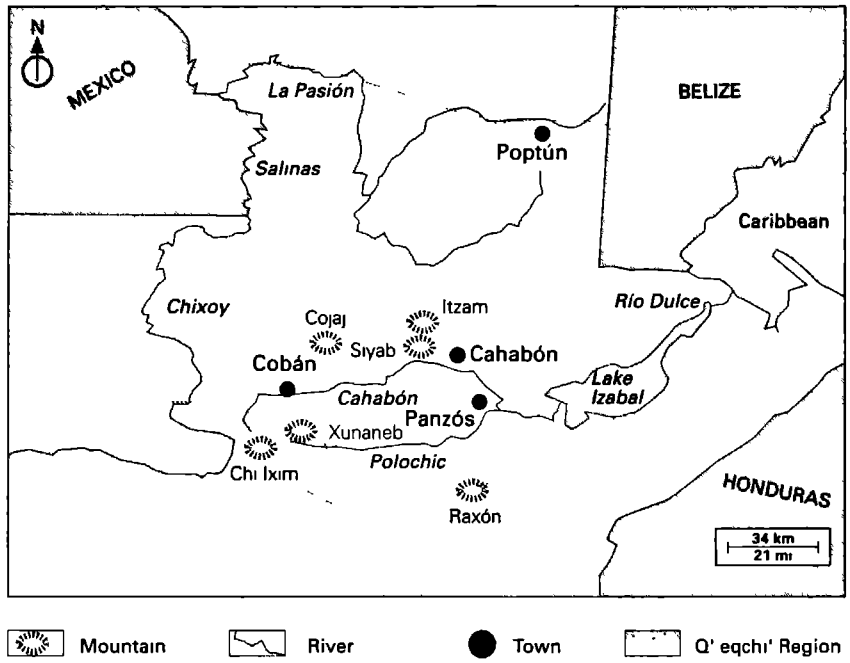
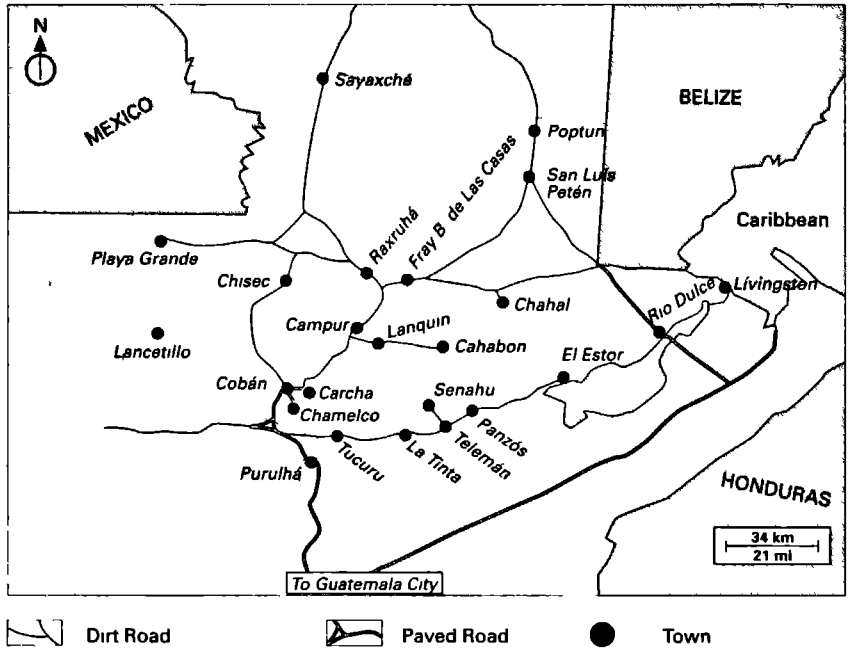


Map 3. Q'eqchi' Region, Roads and Main Towns



Q'eqchi' Heartland:

Cobán, Carchá, Chamelco, Lanquin, Cahabón, Purulha, Tucuru

Franja Transversal del Norte.

Livingston, Río Dulce, Chahal, Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, Raxruhá, Chisec, Playa Grande

Ixcán:

Playa Grande, Lancetillo

Polochic Valley:

El Estor, Panzós, Telemán, La Tinta, Tucuru

PREFACE

In the present globalizing world, social actors are increasingly confronted with flows of people, capital, goods, symbols, information and images stemming from distant corners of the globe. It is not just cosmopolitan business people, journalists or scientists in trade centres, offices, conference rooms or airports and connected by internet who take part in these flows. Even indigenous peoples who live in parts of the world that were considered as remote and isolated until recently are increasingly faced with the new and unknown. One wonders whether there is any space left beyond the Coca Cola frontier.

Actors faced with these flows feel encouraged, or even compelled, to answer to new impulses, to rework their representations and practices, to redefine their identities and to modify their ways of dealing with the ever expanding outside world. The resulting processes of social change raise important questions which involve some of the basic issues of social sciences such as modernity and modernization. While paying due attention to the specific characteristics of each particular case and avoiding the trap of portraying history as the outcome of development laws, we may ask whether these processes have some basic features in common which point into a modern direction. Are these actors trading in pre-modern characteristics for modern or even post-modern ones? Has the literature on modernity and post-modernity any relevance at all to the ways in which actors deal with global flows? Is a homogeneous modern or post-modern world the outcome to be expected from globalization or is its corollary, processes of localization, encouraging increasing local and regional diversity which escapes modern frameworks?

The *Q'eqchi'es*, living in northern Guatemala, make up such a group of social actors who are increasingly immersed in global flows. At first sight they do not appear to be an obvious case for studying the impact of globalization processes. They live rather far away from national and international communication centres and have access to only very poor infrastructure. Within the Guatemalan context they are renowned for their reservation regarding external influences and they stress their own specific characteristics such as their language and dress.

However on closer inspection, it becomes clear that they are involved in global flows. They produce cash crops such as coffee and cardamom that are consumed in North America, Europe and the Arab world. They face the influence of churches whose headquarters are in various parts of the world and many of their traditional or customary practices have a European Catholic origin. Thus, precisely because of the relationship between their

specific characteristics and external influences, they present an excellent case for studying the impact of globalization processes. Moreover they are of great interest from the point of view of the social sciences because so far, little research has focused on them.

I conducted the fieldwork for this study at the invitation by the Bishop of the diocese of Verapaz, Mgr. Gerardo Flores Reyes, and several diocesan officials. The boundaries of the Bishopric of Verapaz encompass the majority of Q'eqchi'es though other ethnic groups are also included in this bishopric and considerable numbers of Q'eqchi'es live in the adjacent bishoprics and diocese-like units of El Quiché, El Petén and Izabal.[1]

The bishop and other clergy were anxious that after almost five centuries of pastoral work in the region, the church should become more sensitive to the Q'eqchi'es' way of life and begin to play a more positive and stimulating role among them. They expected the research to provide greater knowledge about the religion and development strategies of the Q'eqchi'es and about the impact of the development and religious efforts of the Catholic church. With support from the Rafael Landívar University, the AVANCSO research institute and the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the diocese of Verapaz, I carried out the fieldwork during 1991 and 1992 in the diocese of Verapaz and the other areas where Q'eqchi'es live.

After overcoming physical hardship, I set out to analyze my data and write this book at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands. The book has nine chapters. The opening chapter provides a theoretical perspective from which to approach the Q'eqchi'es; it discusses the relevance of the concepts of modernity and modernization in a globalizing world. This chapter also provides some necessary methodological clarifications. In the second chapter some general lines of the history of the Q'eqchi'es and some basic aspects of their life-worlds as well as the four villages that play a central role in my analysis are presented.

Next, religion and economy, two of the main aspects of Q'eqchi' reality which together encompass a large part of their social and cultural world, are discussed. Two clusters of three chapters are dedicated to each of those aspects; the first cluster deals with religion, the second with economy. Each of these clusters starts with a chapter (Chapter Three and Chapter Six) focusing on the relevant agencies and actors such as churches and the ministry of agriculture, that intervene in the life-worlds of the Q'eqchi'es. These are actors and agencies which transmit global flows to the Q'eqchi'es. In the second chapter of each cluster (Chapter Four and Chapter Seven), the practices and representations of the Q'eqchi'es themselves are discussed. The last chapter of each cluster relates the analysis presented in the preceding two chapters to the conceptual framework of Chapter One. In the final chapter (Chapter Nine) the central research questions are answered and

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[1]. I have not focused on the minorities of Q'eqchi'es in Belize and Mexico.

some final reflections are presented on the issues of globalization, modernization and creolization. The latter term is used to characterize the ways Q'eqchi'es deal with problems of modernization.

As a result of this style of argumentation, the chapters vary considerably in character, style and idiom. Some are rather descriptive whereas others concentrate on relating empirical material to theoretical questions and issues. However, they all stay within the boundaries of social sciences. Consequently, I should warn the reader to draw no easy theological conclusions from my work because it was not meant to produce such conclusions. The discussion of the various "persons" in the universe of the Q'eqchi'es in Chapter Four, for example, is not suitable as a basis from which to draw any conclusion as to the monotheistic or polytheistic character of Q'eqchi' religion. For this reason concepts such as "syncretism" which have strong theological connotations, do not appear frequently in this book.

Because this book deals with a specific group in Guatemala which has its own language, the use of several words and expressions that are foreign to English has been unavoidable. These words and expressions are written in italics only the first time they appear. To write them each time in italics would seriously harm the aesthetic qualities of the text. Such words and expressions have been listed in a glossary at the end of the book. Words in Q'eqchi' or other Guatemalan Indian languages have been written in accordance with the official indigenous orthography as established by the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas*. The exceptions to this rule are the names of indigenous groups in their plural form. They have been Castilianized because in the indigenous languages these nouns have no plural form. For example, the word Q'eqchi'es as such does not exist in the Q'eqchi' language; in this language the plural form of Q'eqchi' is *eb' li Q'eqchi'*.

Of course, in many ways this book is the result of teamwork. As the author of this book I am very aware that the whole research project would have been impossible without the invaluable support of many persons and institutes to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. To begin with, I want to thank all the villagers of those communities in which I worked for months and who allowed me to share some of their food, water, shelter, confidence and time and who were so willing to tell me about what they do and think, about their hopes and fears. My assistants and interpreters (Fidel, Cándida, Elvira, Eric, Jorge) also deserve mention especially because of helping me to communicate with the villagers, conduct interviews and solve many intercultural problems. The information, help and institutional backup I received from Mgr. Gerardo Flores Reyes, the priests, religious women, friars and ministers in the region as well as the friends and *compañeros* of the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the diocese of Verapaz (especially Drs. Fons Huet) were absolutely crucial. I owe all of them a great deal. The Rafael Landívar University (especially Dr. Guillermina Herrera) and the AVANCSO research institute (especially Dr. Clara Arenas and Dr. Edgar

Gutierrez) were also very kind in offering me their institutional facilities and backup and intellectual feedback. In addition to this institutional support all those warm, friendly people whom I contacted in Cobán, Guatemala City and other places deserve special mention (especially Juan-José, Juan, María).

In the Netherlands I want to express my gratitude first to Prof. Dr. Arie de Ruijter who helped me through the darkest hours and whose analytical assistance has been crucial. I also feel indebted to my colleagues, intellectual sparring partners and friends at the Third World Centre of the Catholic University of Nijmegen (especially Drs. Luuk Knippenberg and Dr. Frans Schuurman), the Free University of Amsterdam (especially Prof. Dr. André Droogers, Drs. Barbara Boudewijnse, Drs. Marjo de Theije, Dr. Frans Kamsteeg, Drs. Els Jacobs) and at the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation CEDLA in Amsterdam (PhD research group). I appreciate the fact that the authorities of the Nijmegen Institute for Comparative Studies in Development and Cultural Change and the Third World Centre of the University of Nijmegen enabled me to do my research. I am very grateful to Dr. Jean and Zella Carriere for correcting my English text. And, last but not least, the warm and understanding support of my personal friends during the whole process of research and writing has been invaluable. Without them this book would not have come about. I want to thank all of those mentioned here and those whom I may have missed out.

Finally, my thoughts go back to one who gave her life to inform us about what has happened to those whose cries have not been heard, to write down the cruel experiences of those who cannot write. The regime thought it necessary to silence her and with her all those on her side. Myrna Mack.

Hans Siebers
Nijmegen
July 19, 1996.

CHAPTER ONE

IN SEARCH OF A PERSPECTIVE THAT HOLDS:

A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PROLOGUE

1.1 Introduction

In one of the many buses I took in the Q'eqchi' region, I had the following conversation with *Qawa' Manu*, an old Q'eqchi' gentleman, who sat next to me. He was in a cheerful mood.

- 'Where do you come from?' he asked me after some chatting.
- 'From the Netherlands,' I replied.
- 'Where is that? That must be far away, mustn't it?'
- 'Oh yes, very far indeed.'
- 'How many days on foot?'
- 'Forget it, you can't go there on foot.'
- 'Aha, but how many hours would this bus need to get there?'
- 'A bus would not make it across the sea; there is a big sea between here and the place I live. I took an airplane to come here.'
- 'Hum...'
- 'But to give you an idea, the distance is about ten thousand kilometres. If you take the bus to Guatemala city round trip and do that 25 times you have gone more or less that distance.'
- '*Putchica*! Then you must feel very lonely over there,' he responded and smiled.

Here we have Qawa' Manu interviewing me, as it were. He interpreted my information about distance in his framework based on his own experiences and local conventions about distance. He thinks about distance in terms of remoteness from a central town, and usually in the Q'eqchi' region the farther you go from a central town the sparser the population gets. But then again, he smiled at me while he was apparently impressed by our loneliness in Holland. Was he just joking?

Intercultural communication is always an awkward endeavour. One can never be sure about conclusions which are based on information provided by someone from a different cultural background. Here I am writing a book about the Q'eqchi'es of Guatemala and pretending to say something significant about them; but who am I to assume that I am not making the same mistakes Qawa' Manu made about the Netherlands? Nor

can I guarantee that my frame of references does not make the same errors in processing information about and from the Q'eqchi'es that Qawa' Manu made about Dutchmen. I cannot pretend to be error proof.

It seems hard to resist a post-modernist temptation to say that any story one tells about someone else is arbitrary. If you go to the Q'eqchi'es to write a book about them and someone else does the same, you always end up with two different stories. The relationship between what one tries to say about social reality and that reality itself is always problematic. So why not do away with the whole idea of social reality and accept the metaphor of various free-floating stories next to, on top of, beside, or through each other?

Well, of course this book is coloured by the cultural frameworks that inspire the meanings I attribute to what I have experienced and the information I have gathered, and the limitations of my capacity to understand the Q'eqchi'es severely condition its content. However, these considerations do not turn this book into fiction. To be sure, it is highly problematic to speak about social reality because it is impossible to distinguish reality "out there" from our understandings of it, but still the fact cannot be denied that one story about the Q'eqchi'es is more plausible than another and that one cannot say just anything about them. An assertion such as 'all Q'eqchi'es have three legs' is simply not true, as I can assure the reader. Granted that science is just one way of looking at the Q'eqchi'es alongside others, but the application of the methodological rules of the game does distinguish between scientific accounts that are more or less plausible.

The ways methodological requirements have been met in my research on the Q'eqchi'es and the kind and the reach of statements that can reasonably be made in line with the applied methods will be discussed in the final parts of this chapter and in Chapter Two. Before that, my perspective on the Q'eqchi'es will be made more explicit using concepts such as modernization and globalization. Next, the main research questions and the main research tools will be discussed.

1.2 Multiple perspectives to choose from

The acceptance of science as one way of looking at the Q'eqchi'es, alongside poetry or other genres, and defined in terms of a certain set of rules is just one step forward. It still leaves open a variety of theses, options, disciplines, and clusters of meanings that could potentially serve as a perspective from which to approach them. This perspective selects those aspects and elements of the life of the Q'eqchi'es that this book is interested in and it guides the kind of knowledge or understanding this book is intended to produce, in other words the content and shape of the research questions.

One possible perspective is offered by the popular resistance approach highlighting the struggle against capitalist exploitation and political oppression and favouring a political project aiming at social transformation.

This was an approach that had many adherents both inside and outside of Guatemala, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, and has been reflected in a number of books and articles.[1] The adoption of this approach in the case of the Q'eqchi'es is not very promising, however, because only an insignificant number of Q'eqchi'es are organized in trade unions or peasant organizations. Only a limited number have supported the guerrilla struggle and, although quite a number of local Q'eqchi' communities are involved in land conflicts there is no reason to portray these communities as the vanguard or rearguard of any political project (see Chapter Two). This low profile of Q'eqchi' resistance could have been brought about by an impressive repressive or hegemonic effort on the part of the state, but it is my view, based on my fieldwork with them, that an approach focusing on these aspects sheds little light on what the daily life of most Q'eqchi'es is all about.

Another possible perspective on the Q'eqchi'es is opened up by the cultural imperialism thesis. Non-Western areas and cultures - such as Q'eqchi' culture - would be invaded by Western culture which would destroy local cultural identities and replace cultural particularism with homogeneity or cultural synchronization. Western culture would become the standard. The advocates of this thesis point, for example, to the increasing cultural power of Western based media corporations backed by Western economic, political and financial resources, and the global spread of Western consumer practices (hamburgers, Coca Cola).[2] Indeed, the Q'eqchi' region does not remain free from such consumer practices and especially the recent expansion in this region of evangelical churches with their origins in the United States has incited many to talk about religious or cultural imperialism. This interpretation has found its way into sociological and anthropological literature (see Section 3.2.2 on evangelical churches).

However, there are several objections to this thesis. Firstly, its advocates downgrade the meaning-making capacity of actors in non-Western areas and their ability to respond to external meanings and cultural products. The thesis portrays social actors in non-Western areas as mere passive victims of cultural duplicity. Secondly, it takes a paternalistic view of those who buy hamburgers in Guatemala, since they should not do so. Social actors in non-Western areas are expected to refrain from adopting those meanings and practices the advocates of the thesis criticise. Thirdly, these advocates still uphold the idea of Western culture as a homogeneous phenomenon, the adoption of which would create cultural homogeneity all over the world. This idea becomes ever more problematic as post-modernists and others increasingly draw attention to the fact that cultural homogeneity, even at the level of each individual, is an issue that causes serious trouble, let alone at large-scale levels such as a supposed Western culture. Finally, it

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[1]. See for example Black 1984, Arias 1985, Jiménez 1985.

[2]. See for example Hamelink 1983.

is impossible to make explicit the cultural effects of media productions by Western based corporations on receivers of these productions in non-Western areas. Instead, it makes more sense to reformulate the problem by criticizing processes of modernization taking place in Western and non-Western regions alike.[3]

All these approaches have influenced the ways I have been studying Guatemala through the years. The approach which follows served as a starting point at the moment I began my fieldwork among the Q'eqchi'es: the development approach. This fieldwork serves as the foundation of this book and has been inspired by two basic thoughts. First of all, despite the fact that sociology and anthropology of religion have frequently dealt with development issues, the analysis of religion has played scarcely any role in the various paradigms that have ruled development theory, such as modernization theory, the dependency approach and the modes of production debate. Secondly, as was pointed out the Bishop and several diocesan institutions of the bishopric of Verapaz expressed their desire to enlarge their knowledge and to deepen their insights into the relationship between their development efforts (economic, education and health care projects) and their religious work among indigenous groups. I started my fieldwork focusing on the interrelations between religion and development among the Q'eqchi'es. I subdivided the development part into economics, education and health care as I went ahead.

Trouble soon crossed my path. The concept of development turned out to be no easy analytical tool because of its ambiguous character. On the one hand it refers to a "real" process of social change: its positive or substantive side. On the other hand, not just any process of social change qualifies as development. The concept of development has a normative character as well: it supposes that the actors concerned are becoming "better off" and that in the end their situation has "improved".[4]

As a result of this ambiguity and confusion of substantive and normative aspects, it is difficult to work out a sound and consistent definition of development. As regards social change as such, the positive or substantive side, one can consult the social scientists' discussions of modernity, as development theorists have always done. Basic aspects of these discussions have played the role of - often implicit - presuppositions of the various definitions of the concept of development. In spite of the

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[3]. See Tomlinson 1991.

[4]. See Hettne 1990: 234-241. In line with Hettne I do not agree with Frans Schuurman (Knippenberg, Schuurman 1996: 63*ff*) who makes a distinction between development and progress. He attributes normative connotations to the concept of progress and perceives development as any process of social change. I would say that in development studies literature and in the practice of development work and development cooperation the concept of development is almost always used in a normative way. It is rather the social and sociological incarnation of the philosophical concept of progress.

differences between them, this holds true not only for narrowly defined modernization theory[5], but also for subsequent paradigms.

The normative side of development has made the concept liable to all kinds of desires and wishes. Based on political, ideological, moral, humanistic, and other considerations and interests it has been claimed that development should legitimate the entry of Western capital in developing countries; that it ought to bring us all a step closer to socialism; that it should alleviate poverty; that it ought to be sustainable; that it should contribute to closing the social inequality gap; that women in particular should benefit from it; that it ought to fit in the ecological context, and so on.

To be sure, many of these qualifications might be very desirable, the problem is: 'Who speaks?' Are these qualifications relevant in the case of the Q'eqchi'es or are there other priorities and who is supposed to answer that question? Of course, the Q'eqchi'es themselves ought mainly to decide, but that leads to the problematic assumption that they would speak with one voice. Moreover, the act of asking the Q'eqchi'es may involve others and what if these others define development problems that most of the Q'eqchi'es themselves do not consider to be a problem? Development processes may be conceptualized in terms of interfaces between target groups and intervening agencies leading to an articulation of elements stemming from the objectives, policies, discourses and practices of both[6], but this approach does not really solve the normative issue. The mix of positive and normative aspects within the concept of development limits its analytical value in case studies and complicates efforts to reach a more general definition that transcends the case study.

Moreover, as long as speakers at the international level - development agencies, Western and other governments and international agencies dominated by these governments - have a strong voice in defining the normative side of development it remains difficult to escape from an ethnocentric framework while using this concept. The fact that this level is becoming polyvocal - Western speakers having no monopoly any more - does not make any difference from the point of view of the Q'eqchi'es in this respect.

Faced with these problems I continued my fieldwork studying religion, economics, education and health care among the Q'eqchi'es. In so doing I did not lose sight of the fact that the Q'eqchi'es continued to work out their aspirations and desires to improve their situation; their efforts to reach a better situation continued to impress me. Meanwhile I looked for another perspective from which a more fruitful analysis of the practices and meanings of the Q'eqchi'es as well as of the actors and agencies that intervene in their lives might be made.

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[5]. See Rostow 1960.
[6]. See Long 1992.

1.3 The globalization and modernization perspective

> One morning in 1991 when the inhabitants of the Q'eqchi' town of Campur woke up, haze was hanging between the mountains and hills in the surrounding landscape. A few hours later, when I arrived in the town, the priest told me that several Q'eqchi'es had expressed their anxiety that this haze might be smoke because there was a new war. The radio had told them the night before that the Gulf War had broken out.

At the end of the present century the world has reached a stage in which even in remote and relatively isolated towns such as Campur messages from the other side of the world come through; but in the course of global communications the meanings of messages are easily modified within the local and particular context. Meanings flowing through global communication and becoming transformed within local contexts are highlighted in the present-day literature on globalization.

The globalization perspective principally sheds light on the compression of the world. New transportation and communication systems allow social relations and interactions to increasingly span the globe. Exchanges and movements of people, technology, capital, images and ideas take on global dimensions.[7] Distant localities are linked in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.[8] One is increasingly confronted with aspects of different cultures that stem from many parts of the polycentric world. Globalization not only refers to processes; the world as a whole is adopting systemic properties in which characteristics of each particular entity have to be understood within the framework of the world as a whole.[9]

The global system and globalization processes constitute just one part of the story: they cannot exist without their corollary, *i.e.* processes of localization. The latter refers to the incorporation of meanings and elements from global flows into local processes of meaning-making.[10] It alludes to the adoption to local tastes and desires of marketing strategies that are designed at the global level.[11] It points to the particularization and fragmentation of individual world-views and moral frames of references.[12] It emphasizes the increasing need for every individual and group to search

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[7]. Appadurai 1990: 296-301.
[8]. Giddens 1990: 64.
[9]. Robertson 1992. For an elaboration of the difference between globalization as a process and the global system see Friedman 1995.
[10]. Hannerz 1992: 217-267.
[11]. Robertson 1995: 28.
[12]. Bauman 1991: 12-14, 185-187; Bauman 1993: 195-197.

for new identities in the face of the questioning or relativization of pre-existing cultural frames of references in the globalizing framework.

Globalization and localization are involved in constant interplay. On the one hand, universal aspects or elements that belong to global or cosmopolitan culture for example may be adapted to particular local circumstances. The production of specific Mexican or Brazilian soap operas presents a case in point. On the other hand, definitions of local particular identities may legitimize themselves in global and universal terms and may become global movements. The movements of indigenous peoples appealing to international laws and conventions and creating networks among each other exemplify this trend. There is a constant interpenetration of the global and the local, of the universal and the particular.[13]

Is all this just another way of saying that the world is becoming ever more homogeneous; is this the cultural imperialism thesis redefined in other terms? No, it is not. Of course, global communication presupposes at least some standards of communication and culture, such as the mastering of international languages; but next to homogenizing tendencies the globalization perspective also points to heterogenizing trends both at the global and the local level. There are various images of world order competing to define the global circumstance, and cultural particularities increasingly try to enter the global scene.[14] Besides homogenizing trends there is increasing cultural plurality and fragmentation at the local level. Multiculturality comes to the fore at each level.

Another way of stating the homogeneous-heterogeneous problem is to define it in terms of modernity. The meanings that are flowing globally, the institutions that are spreading all over the globe, the cultural particularities that are becoming transformed, the practices of the main actors on the global arena: can all these phenomena be classified either in modern or post-modern terms and what about pre-modern features in a globalizing context? Does modernity monopolize the scene and require some minimum level of standardization of institutions and cultural frameworks or is a basic degree of diversity guaranteed because globalization incorporates and recovers pre-modern and post-modern elements? Then again, is modernity itself a homogeneous and coherent phenomenon encouraging homogenization?

The debate on globalization has led to a renewed interest in the issue of modernity but there is quite some controversy in the literature on the relationship between both phenomena. Giddens and Robertson exemplify the basic opposites in this respect. Giddens positions the decisive discontinuity in the transition from pre-modern to modern or post-traditional society and conceives of globalization as just the enlargement of

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[13]. Robertson 1995: 30.
[14]. Robertson 1992: 77-83.

modernity. Driven by the modern dynamics of time and space separation[15], the disembedding of social relations[16] and the reflexive or explicit ordering of social relations in the light of continual inputs of knowledge, globalization means the spread of modern institutional dimensions all over the globe. These dimensions, *i.e.* capitalism, industrialism, surveillance capacities and control over the means of violence, adopt a global shape in the forms of the world capitalist economy, the international division of labour, the nation-state system and the world military order.[17]

By contrast, in Robertson's view globalization is something qualitatively new compared to modernity. He holds the radical claim that globalization rather than modernity should be the essential *explanans* in contemporary social sciences.[18] In criticizing Giddens he even maintains that globalization predates modernity, so how can the former be the enlargement of the latter?[19]

In my view, there is more rethoric than substance to this controversy. Giddens' and Robertson's positions do not need to rule each other out. On the one hand, Giddens' argument that modern institutions made globalization possible is simply illustrated by the fact that without *modern* technology of communication and transport the present degree of compression of the world would obviously have been impossible. On the other hand, Robertson's point that contemporary processes of modernization - modernity developing strongholds all over the world - take place within the context of globalization, a context that leaves strong marks on these processes, makes sense as well. In short, given the fact that modernity refers to a wide range of issues, I advocate the view that globalization can be conceived as a contemporary element of modernity.

The positioning of globalization and localization within the wider framework of the discussions on pre-modernity, modernity and post-modernity opens up the possibility of reaching a more balanced and integral approach to both phenomena. The debate on globalization and localization has remained quite sectoralized without much interrelation between the various sectors. There is Wallerstein *cum suis* focusing on economic matters

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[15]. In modern conditions time is no longer linked to a particular place. It can now be organized in agendas and time-tables that allow a complex society to function. Giddens 1990: 17-19.

[16]. Social relations are "lifted out" of the local context. Individual actors can now engage in social relations with other actors many miles away. Giddens 1990: 21-22.

[17]. Giddens 1990: 4, 52-56, 63, 70-71.

[18]. Robertson 1992: 31.

[19]. Robertson 1992: 143. His statement is not very convincing. First of all, his own periodization of globalization would easily fit any periodization of modernity (Robertson 1992: 58-60). Secondly, both globalization and modernity are about ideal-typical constructions of social reality, they do not pretend to be exact historical descriptions. Thus, his argument that global tendencies predated modernity does not make sense because that would be the same as saying that urbanization does not belong to modernity because there were cities in some parts of the world long before modern times.

within the framework of the capitalist world-economy[20]; there is Meyer and his colleagues writing about the world political system;[21] and there are the authors discussing globalization in the cultural sense. The latter want to complement Wallerstein's and Meyer's work, but do not work out an interdisciplinary approach. They risk falling into a culturalist trap, *i.e.* the suggestion that the study of culture is in itself sufficient for a complete understanding of human life.[22]

Discussions on (pre-, post-) modernity may offer a foundation on which to construct a more comprehensive approach integrating globalization and localization as two components of contemporary modernity,[23] but such an effort needs considerable qualification. To begin with, such an approach can only be made after asserting that modernity itself is a far from homogeneous phenomenon. There are no Great Unifyers in modernity; instead, it is marked by paradoxes and different internal logics that can enter into conflict with each other.[24] It is certainly no mono-causal phenomenon and disjunctures between the constitutive elements of modernity are even exacerbated by globalization.[25] Consequently, modernity often remains very incomplete; it may take centuries or just a few years to come about and its operation may be marked by reversals and deviations. The coming into being of modernity is no singular, linear or all-encompassing process. It is open-ended and there are multiple trajectories through the terrain of or journeys through modernity.[26]

Next, the use of the concept of modernity should not entail a revival of the Grand Narrative of progress, evolutionism and optimism.[27] If they were ever there, the times for such narratives are over. The contemporary globalization debate is not only about new possibilities and horizons or the increasing diversity of meanings which local actors can make use of in their meaning-making processes. The debate also involves concerns about authenticity and identity and about the fear of social disorder. The anxiety

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[20]. See for example Hopkins, Wallerstein 1982.

[21]. See Beyer 1994: 21-26.

[22]. See Hannerz 1992: 16. An example of a one-sided approach is provided by the way Robertson discusses the rise of indigenous movements (Robertson 1992: 73, 168-172). He conceives of these movements narrowly as movements phrased in global terms promoting a certain definition or image of world order. However, these movements are *also* social and political movements with specific social and political objectives and practices, for example trying to attract money and subsidies from foreign donor agencies. Their internal dynamics may include an often problematic relationship between the pronouncements of these movements on the one hand and the kind of identity constructions of those whom they claim to represent on the other. The elements of basic interests involved in these movements escape Robertson's discussion (see also Friedman 1995: 73, 87).

[23]. In this sense Friedman portrays Robertson's approach to globalization in the cultural sense as the identity space of modernity (Friedman 1995: 71).

[24]. Therborn 1995: 128-129; Giddens 1990: 5-6.

[25]. Arnason 1990: 220, 227; Appadurai 1990: 297-301.

[26]. Therborn 1995: 131, 135-136.

[27]. See Therborn 1995: 137.

of what Durkheim characterized as anomy becomes ever more topical in the present global context.[28] The dark and destructive side of modernity is at least as prominent as its possible positive aspects. Social inequality is increasing.[29] The holocaust is intimately linked to the severe ethical regimes of states in the modern era.[30] Totalitarianism, the destruction of the material environment, the massive devastating capacity of military power and the threat of personal meaninglessness are all possibilities created by modernity.[31] Chaos, disjunctures and disorder are symptomatic of the present-day world.[32] Robertson stands rather alone looking for order in the global field.

To be sure, from the start of the study of modernity this phenomenon has been evaluated as something ambivalent. Three of the founding-fathers of modern sociology - Durkheim, Weber and Marx - were certainly not very convinced of the blessings of modernity. They saw threatening dangers of anomy, social disintegration, the loss of values and meaning of life, the locking of man within the iron cage of bureaucracy, brutal exploitation and *Verelendung*. The belief in progress and the promises of science - including the belief in the possibility of reaching certainty by way of rationally understanding and transforming social reality - has perhaps had more adherents outside the realm of social science than within it. This belief will be classified as belonging to a specific condition within modernity which will be labelled as "originally modern" below.

The belief in the possibility of using the ratio in order to understand and transform social reality may have given way to scepticism, but there is no need to fall into the other extreme of post-modernist assumptions that knowledge is impossible. Disconnecting knowledge from certitude - '*nothing* is certain, and nothing can be proved' - and accepting the fact that knowledge is never unquestionable, Giddens holds on to the notion of knowledge in the sense of constructions that are valid 'in principle' and 'until further notice'.[33] Consequently, reflexivity or the constant examination and reformation of social practices in the light of incoming information and knowledge - a fundamental characteristic of modern life - remains possible. In line with Giddens I hold that the issues post-modernist authors point to do not constitute a rupture with modernity but a new condition within modernity.[34] I will call this condition "contemporary

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[28]. Loo, van der, Reijen, van 1993: 92.
[29]. Therborn 1995: 129.
[30]. Bauman 1989.
[31]. Giddens 1990: 8, 9, 111.
[32]. Appadurai 1990.
[33]. Giddens 1990: 39, 48-49.
[34]. Giddens 1990: 38, 50-51. For example, a view of culture emphasizing diversity and highlighting non-sharing of meanings can be made instrumental without accepting post-modernist epistemological claims: see Hannerz 1992.

modern" in which these issues as well as the themes raised by the globalization debate will be included.

The distinction between two conditions of modernity, an original and a contemporary one, may be complemented by a third condition, called "pre-modern". These conditions refer to a specific type of society or culture and as such these concepts have a synchronic character. A diachronic perspective can be opened up by using the term "modernization" to point to processes of social transformation from pre-modern characteristics to originally and contemporary modern features. However, whether such a unilinear diachronic way of conceiving modernization is fruitful in the light of my empirical material on the Q'eqchi'es remains an open question here and will be taken up in the section on the central research questions (Section 1.6). In addition, in using the term modernization it is essential to reject all kinds of connotations that stem from "modernization theory". This theory has drawn on the discussions on modernity in a distorted and simplistic way within the context of the cold war and assuming a single process, a single direction and a given end provided by the Western example.[35] Within this narrowly conceived theory[36] the term modernization has not only been used as a description, but also as a prescription for social transformation in non-Western areas. All these assumptions have been discarded in the discussions above on the qualifications of modernity.

1.4 Modernization made explicit

Free from all these assumptions the modernization perspective will be the one that will be used in this book as a point of view to look at the Q'eqchi'es. This vocabulary of modernity and modernization covers a wide variety of items and issues which first have to be made explicit. In line with the often contradictory character of modernity there are various, often contradictory treatments of (elements of) modernity in social science literature. There is a wide range of approaches and each sheds its light on specific aspects. As a result, any attempt to conceptualize modernity and modernization shows clear interpretative marks because it is based on a limited selection of writers and aspects and it cannot avoid an eclectic character. Nevertheless, in the following pages I will try to work out a balanced overview of the various aspects of modernity and modernization selecting those aspects that might be relevant to the social reality of the Q'eqchi'es. Contradictions within the literature will be made explicit as much as possible.

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[35]. See for example Rostow 1960.
[36]. Robertson 1992: 11.

Disembedding

As a starting point for discussing modernization Tönnies[37] *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* theme remains fruitful. In a pre-modern context social relations and communications are mainly circumscribed by primordial and all-encompassing social units such as the local community and kinship systems. Within a process of modernization social relations are "lifted out" of the local context of interaction.[38] Communication is no longer restricted to this local context. A dialectical process of individualism and collectivism, of individualist and associative action has its way. On the one hand the individual can no longer take these local relations of community and kinship for granted. He or she is immersed in a process of individualization stressing individual achievement, competition and education and the flourishing of individual talents and ambitions. On the other hand, society offers the individual a number of networks and institutions to associate with, such as trade unions and other class-based associations, bureaucratic organizations, political parties, and enterprises which emphasize co-operation, collective unity, solidarity, common goals, and organization.[39]

In addition, social relations are increasingly inscribed within the framework of modern society as a whole which coalesces with the nation. Individuals are encouraged to identify with the nation as an "imagined community"[40] which develops its own cultural characteristics. To the individual it becomes the predominant reference point of identity construction. Moreover, the nation becomes linked to a specific state. The state extends its administrative control and supervision in the territory over which it claims sovereignty and appropriates a monopoly on the means of violence.[41] The state has an interest in promoting cultural homogeneity within its borders.[42] This culture either serves national social integration or works as an ideology legitimating or veiling class relations, depending on whether one takes a Durkheimian or a (neo-)Marxist position.

The rise of the nation-state is an expression of the process of globalization,[43] but in the present phase of globalization its role and

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[37]. Tönnies 1957.

[38]. According to Giddens (Giddens 1990: 21) this "lifting out" is especially emphasized in the context of globalization, but it starts at the very beginning of modernization. As such, globalization is the continuation of modernization.

[39]. In this respect Therbon (Therborn 1995: 131, 135-137) writes about two vehicles through modernity: individualism and association. The former is linked to liberalism, the latter to nationalism and socialism.

[40]. Anderson 1987. This community is "imagined" because most of its members are unknown to each single individual.

[41]. Giddens 1990: 57.

[42]. On the question of what created what - the nation or the state - and their relations with economic changes such as the industrial revolution, there are considerable differences of opinion.

[43]. Robertson 1992: 69; Beyer: 51.

importance are seriously challenged. Disembedded communication no longer halts at national borders, and individuals increasingly draw on images and identity constructions of groups in other parts of the world. On the one hand, relatively new dimensions of identity constructions at the international and global level are coming to the fore. National identity is now constructed in interaction with images of good society that have been constructed in other societies and the champions of Human Rights and international law claim there is something like humankind embodying certain universal rules and values.[44] On the other hand, intermediary groups and units such as ethnic groups increasingly claim a specific identity and special rights, including territorial ones. These groups disrupt the scheme of national culture and identity and may easily cross national borders.[45]

In short, the nation-state is increasingly confronted with a variety of levels of identity construction and socialization both beneath and above the national level. This variety seriously questions the cultural role of the nation-state and points to multicultural societies in which ethnicity and ethnic groups can no longer be relegated to a pre-modern condition.[46] They are part and parcel of contemporary modernity. Moreover, the nation-state increasingly loses its capacity to intervene in society as capital, goods, people, and meanings move and flow from one part of the world to another and even its monopoly of the means of violence within its borders is becoming severely contested in many parts of the world.

Of course, the state still has essential functions to fulfil in order to create a climate in which the economy can flourish, and in many parts of the world reality has never come close to the concept of the nation-state. Nevertheless, Stuart Hall's distinction between two phases of globalization is convincing. The first phase is characterized by such phenomena as classes and nation-states. In the contemporary phase these phenomena have to give way to increasing social and cultural fragmentation and multiculturality.[47]

Differentiation

In the wake of modernization society becomes increasingly complex. In a pre-modern condition there is a relatively low-level division of labour. In a large part of society each household or community develops more or less the same basic activities. Economics, social relations, politics and religion are inextricably intertwined: the social actors concerned do not make a distinction in these terms, and from an analytical point of view a pre-modern action cannot be neatly classified into one of these categories. Pre-

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44. See Robertson 1992: 75*ff.*
45. Appadurai 1990: 303-306.
46. See Nederveen Pieterse 1995: 49-52; Hall 1991: 22-26.
47. Hall 1991: 33.

modern society is mainly organized in terms of a hierarchy of different strata and status-groups among which status, wealth and power are unequally distributed. Basically, the ruling strata's aim is to reproduce their status and power, and social inequality is based on ascription. The meaning of an action by a social actor is determined by the question to which status-group this actor belongs.[48]

The increasing complexity of modern society is reflected in an ever more detailed division of labour. Each actor concentrates on one specific activity and exchanges the products of this activity. As a result, mechanical solidarity, in which social obligations are enforced in the rather uncomplicated context of a local community and kinship system, gives way to organic solidarity. The increasing division of labour entails the interdependence of actors towards each other because for his or her survival each actor needs to exchange the products of his or her labour with others.[49]

The division of labour also leads to the separation of economics, politics, science, religion, art, etc. into as many distinct institutions.[50] Each of these dimensions of society develops into a specific field or sub-system oriented towards the fulfilment of a specific function - making money (economy), producing knowledge (science) etc. - and is made up of a network of unequal power relations. As a result of this functional specialization, modern society is able to vastly increase its resources because its functionality is exactly oriented towards this increase.[51]

At first, when the division of labour has not yet advanced very much there is a considerable level of convergence in the position and culture of large sectors of society. Classes and status groups continue to play an important role in social inequality and ascription remains an important principle of social classification.[52] But as modernization moves ahead social inequality becomes much more individualized and fragmented.[53] The action of an individual social actor now receives meaning in terms of how it contributes to the fulfilment of the function that is at stake in a specific field or sub-system; the group to which the actor belongs becomes less important

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[48]. See Beyer 1994: 33-41 drawing especially on Luhmann, N., *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer Allgemeinen Theorie*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1984, and Luhmann, N., *Essays on Self-Reference*, New York, Columbia University, 1990.

[49]. See Loo, van der, Reijen, van 1993: 88-91, drawing on Durkheim, E., *De la division du travail social*, Paris, 1893.

[50]. Godelier 1978: 765.

[51]. See for example Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 97; Beyer 1994: 33-41 drawing especially on Luhmann.

[52]. Not only Marx's class society is a case in point here. Weber Points to the role of economic possessions and prestige as two sources of social inequality which is in line with Bourdieu's use of the terms economic and cultural capital. See Loo, van der, Reijen, van 1993: 101-107.

[53]. Loo, van der, Reijen, van 1993: 104.

in terms of providing meaning to the action.[54] Achievement becomes the basic principle in order to define one's place in society.

This definition is necessarily many-sided because of the fact that any social actor is playing a role in various fields or sub-systems, and achievement can be made in each of these fields. Each actor has a variety of subject positions and plays various social roles in daily life. Thus he or she has a variety of related perspectives from which to look at the world.[55] This plurality of subject positions causes the segmentation or fragmentation of his or her life-world.

Each of these perspectives can relate the individual to processes of professionalization. The division of labour entails the differentiation between a corps of specialists on the one hand and laypersons on the other. Pre-modern indigenous knowledge (knowledge based on accumulated experiences, transmitted from one generation to another, which tends to be rich, varied and adapted to the requirements of living in the local milieu) is replaced by scientifically or rationally elaborated knowledge. Giddens talks about deskilling and reskilling in this respect.[56] Specialists claim the competence to produce this expertise on which laypersons come to depend. The other side of the construction of competence on the part of the specialists is the construction of incompetence or ignorance considered to be common to laypersons. Moreover, specialists tend to selectively transmit their knowledge to laypersons. Consequently, relations between specialists and laypersons disclose a clear asymmetrical character.[57]

Part of the process of deskilling and reskilling is the shift from trust in persons to trust in abstract systems. In a pre-modern setting social actors trust persons who possess special capacities, and essential tasks in the reproduction of life are accomplished by way of direct interactions between persons. For example, personal contacts such as strategic marriages are intended to secure the establishment of political relations. As a result, the repeated confirmation of the "honour", "probity", "friendship" or "love" of the other person are essential in a pre-modern setting for the reproduction of all aspects of social life.[58]

By contrast, in a modern setting the functionality of fields or sub-systems depends on trust in abstract things such as professional expertise. For example, going upstairs we trust in the expertise of the architect who designed the building, a trust that makes us confident that the building will not immediately collapse. To be sure, the trust in expertise has to be confirmed once in a while by direct interaction with professionals who represent this expertise, but the emphasis rests on the expertise itself and

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[54]. See Beyer 1994: 33-41 drawing on Luhmann.
[55]. Laclau 1985: 27-42; Hannerz 1992: 64-68.
[56]. Giddens 1990: 144*ff*.
[57]. See Hannerz 1992: 53-55, 81-84.
[58]. See Giddens 1990: 27, 33; Beyer 1994: 64.

not on the professionals. As a result, actions within a field or sub-system become abstracted from the persons who perform them because the functionality of the action is the crucial thing. Institutions and organizations take over the essential communicative tasks, and within them functional and formal communication sets the standard. Interactions of a more personal character become less important for the functioning of society. This trust in professional expertise is not something that can be taken for granted. Formal education plays a crucial role here in teaching children to respect expert knowledge of all kinds.[59]

Rationalization

Rationally elaborated knowledge, fields or sub-systems oriented towards the optimization of the fulfilment of a specific function and functional communication, all these phenomena already point to another central aspect of modernization, *i.e.* rationalization. In a pre-modern condition the social actor depends heavily on nature, the community and on the kinship line to which he or she belongs. The actor feels part of nature which he or she often views in terms of "persons", gods, and spirits. The actor shares in the common culture of the community and kinship line, and a more or less pre-fixed identity is handed down to him or her by this social context.[60]

Within the process of modernization the world becomes disenchanted and social relations no longer have a pre-fixed character. Consequently, both nature and social relations can become the object of formal rationality: they can be used and instrumentalized in order to optimize the function of a specific field or to meet the objectives of individuals and organizations.[61] Efficiency, usefulness and calculation of means are the catchwords.

In addition, the logic of formal rationality and the need to function in sub-systems confronts the individual with an extensive set of requirements. He or she has to be able to live an ordered and disciplined life, to control his or her emotions, to master his or her behaviour and to be able to plan his or her life. In this sense Norbert Elias talks about the transition from *Fremdzwang* to *Selbstzwang* within the modern process of civilization.[62]

This Selbstzwang is in line with the working of ideology in a capitalist society - if one wishes to follow a (neo)Marxist argument - or with the effects of the moral order or *conscience collective* - if one prefers to follow a Durkheimian logic. In both cases the individual is pressured to refrain from actions that might disrupt the existing power relations or lead to the disintegration of society. The state as a cultural and moral unifier,

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[59]. Giddens 1990: 26, 33, 80-89; Beyer 1994: 59, 64, 99.
[60]. See Hannerz 1992: 41-43; Therborn 1995: 131.
[61]. See Loo, van der, Reijen, van 1993: 126-128 and Morrison 1995: 220-223, both writing about Max Weber.
[62]. Loo, van der, Reijen van 1993: 109, 113, 146*ff*.

prescribing ethical codes to its citizens, plays an important role in this modern context.

However, the calculating and disciplined actor and the viability of ideologies and unifying cultures are highly problematic phenomena. Freud has already suggested that passions and sexual desires are basic human drives which may easily conflict with the modern requirement to control, plan and discipline one's life. Weber has pointed to the fact that the modern emphasis on formal rationality may entail the loss of a more fundamental rationality, *i.e.* substantive rationality. The latter is concerned with basic values which make sense of fundamental issues of life. Instrumental rationality is about the efficiency of means; substantive rationality focuses on the sense and meaning of objectives. Weber was seriously concerned about the fact that in a modern context the latter may give way to the former making moral behaviour ever more unlikely and undermining any possibility of making sense of life and answering existential problems in the absence of religion.[63]

In addition, with the increasing fragmentation of the individual's life-world and the diversification of role and perspective repertoires the possibilities of constructing some sort of encompassing and integral identity and the search for some level of authenticity become very questionable. Moreover, Durkheim's fear of a disintegrating society is magnified by Bauman's emphasis on the disappearance of cultural and moral unifiers in society. The state is neither able to produce such unifiers any more, nor do the majority of its citizens expect the state to do so. The contented majority, politically inactive and apathetic, act as independent managers of private destinies and believe that they benefit from the continuous shrinking of the state's interference. Cultural and moral choices have been privatized: they have become a matter of the individual's decision.[64] On the other hand, Giddens remains convinced that in spite of the tendency towards cultural fragmentation there are also trends towards integration. He maintains that a self-identity remains possible because of the reflexive capacities offered by modernity.[65]

In any case, the contemporary modern world is marked by tensions and conflicts between disintegration and integration, fragmentation and merging, individualization and globalization, heterogeneity and homogeneity, diversity and uniformity, the universal and the particular. An important source of these tensions is the fact that each individual, group, or social institution is increasingly faced with the difficulty of claiming an absolute identity. The process of globalization entails the relativization of every identity and world view.

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[63]. See Morrison 1995: 121-122; Loo, van der, Reijen, van 1993: 123-134.
[64]. Bauman 1990: 143-169; Bauman 1993: 138-140.
[65]. Giddens 1990: 150.

In principle, each group or actor can take one of two different stands regarding this relativization: a fundamentalist and a creolizing one. In the fundamentalist case the reaction is defensive, conserving the values and characteristics one is supposed to have, rejecting modernization and external influences. In the creolizing case the emphasis is on the hybrid, the crossover, on the selective incorporation of external influences, institutions and meanings, on the creative interplay between indigenous and exogenous elements. The endeavour - more or less wilfully - is to create something new out of the syncretization of inputs stemming from one's own cultural background and from foreign cultures, losing some, winning some. Local cultural entrepreneurs take external influences apart and tamper and tinker with them in such a way that the resulting new forms are more responsive to, and at the same time in part outgrowths of, local everyday life.[66] Whatever different categories the terms creole[67], hybrid[68], or syncretic[69] refer to, they all point to processes of bringing together, merging, mixing and synthesizing elements or meanings from these different categories.

These concepts have not remained free from criticism. Friedman is highly critical of the concept of creolization.[70] In his opinion the concept presupposes an essentialist view of culture, as if culture were a "thing" or a "substance" that can be attributed to specific groups and that can be mixed and merged. Instead, Friedman prefers to view culture as a process of meaning-making by social actors in a specific social context. In my view culture refers not only to a process of meaning-making; it also presents itself as bodies or structures of meanings. In the process of constructing meaning the social actor uses existing meanings stemming from different origins. These present themselves to him or her as given structures or bodies which he or she mixes or builds upon in the meaning-making process; the results present themselves as given structures to the actor him- or herself as well as to others in new meaning-making. In short, in my view culture is both a process and the products of this process, which may merge and mix; this means that the concept of creolization remains valid and useful.

Friedman does make sense by paying attention to social actors and contexts. Cultural processes of creolization or fundamentalist reactions do not take place in a social vacuum. Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault have already pointed to power aspects which are intrinsic to any discourse or structure of meanings. A meaning is not just constructed, it is also communicated and the act of communicating not only includes an exchange of meanings but also an effort to make someone else do something.

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66. Hannerz 1991: 124-127; Hannerz 1992: 261-267; Hall 1991: 37-39; Robertson 1992: 101, 114.
67. Races or languages. See Hannerz 1992.
68. Things modern categories are supposed to keep apart, such as nature and culture. See Latour 1994.
69. Practices and meanings stemming from different religions.
70. Friedman 1995: 82-84.

Consequently, in analyzing creolization and fundamentalism the social actors involved have to be brought in as well as their agendas, the power relations between them and unequal access to resources. The results of creolization and fundamentalist reactions not only embody difference, they also reflect asymmetrical power relations. The products of creolization processes and fundamentalist reactions may come closer to the agenda of one group of actors than to the objectives and intentions of other actors involved.

Secularization

The disenchantment of the world has already been marked as an important element of modernization. In a pre-modern context the world is seen in terms of relations with another world of gods, spirits and invisible "persons". The actors try to manipulate supernatural powers which are considered to be arbitrary and punitive. Religion can scarcely be distinguished from other spheres of life. Religious modalities provide essential support for issues that in a modern context become functions of specific sub-systems or fields: *e.g.* religious ritual and prescription are indispensable for the good hunt or harvest. Religion plays an important role in the ways nature, social relations and the actors themselves are conceived.[71]

Within the context of modernization and the separation of functions of specific sub-systems or fields, religion develops into one of these sub-systems or fields and becomes subject to professionalization.[72] In Bourdieu's terminology, a religious field comes into being which is specialized in the production, administration and distribution of means of salvation. This field is made up of a corps of religious specialists - clergy, prophets and sorcerers - on the one hand, and laypersons on the other. The specialists claim the right to lastingly and profoundly modify the practices and world visions of the laity who are consequently dispossessed of this right. The power of the specialists to do so not only rests on their capacity to convince the laity, it can be reinforced by coercive power: *i.e.* to deny the laity the means of salvation or to excommunicate them. In relatively stable periods the clergy is able to virtually monopolize religious power; the only limitation is provided by sorcerers who focus on partial techniques of curation and do not rely on broad symbolic power. In times of crisis a prophet may rise and challenge the authority of the clergy by effectively responding to the interests of the laity and on the basis of the charisma

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[71]. Hervieu-Léger 1989: 74; Bourdieu 1971a: 309; Bourdieu 1971b: 7-8; Beyer 1994: 102.

[72]. At least *e.g.* P. Berger, N. Luhmann, B. Wilson, and P. Bourdieu think it does, Th. Luckmann is sceptical about this idea. P. Beyer says that only Christianity has been partially successful in this respect. See Beyer 1994: 101-106.

attributed to his or her person. If the prophet succeeds, his or her sect develops into another bureaucratic church organization.[73]

Bourdieu's theory of the religious field is certainly instructive, but it has two major shortcomings. First, he ignores the meaning-making capacity of lay actors and portrays them as passive consumers of the representations and practices offered by religious specialists. It has to be recognized, though, that these specialists are never able to completely dominate the lay actors and that the latter maintain a circumscribed but real room for manoeuvre to construct religious meanings themselves and to decide for themselves on religious practices.

Secondly, in line with his neglect of the meaning-making capacity of lay actors, he identifies the ideological role of religion in a very unilateral way. In his view the specialists offer a religious discourse to dominant groups and classes that legitimizes the power of these classes and groups. To subordinate groups the religious discourse offers a compensation in the hereafter. According to Bourdieu, religion sacralizes the arbitrary. Based on the recognition of the progressive role of some expressions of religion and of part of the clergy in Latin American political struggles, Otto Maduro has criticised this ideological aspect of Bourdieu's theory. The clergy, he believes, may promote a "collective religious consciousness" among the subordinated classes that makes them autonomous vis-à-vis the ruling classes.[74] The ideological role of religion is not unequivocal.

With the rise of the religious field the character of religion itself changes considerably. Religion becomes the object of the rationalizing and moralizing work of the religious specialists in order to offer organized belief systems to the laity. The official religion or theology produced by the clergy has a coherent and homogeneous character, emphasizes moral standards and the concept of sin, and makes a claim to universal and eternal validity. Immediate relations to nature and the manipulation of supernatural powers are substituted by rather abstract and long-term goals. God is portrayed as righteous and protecting and requires contemplative attention and moral behaviour.[75] However, because of the fact that the specialists' capacity to influence the laity has its limits, there is always a tension between this official religion and religious representations and practices typical of lay religion. This lay religion, or popular religion if you like,[76] does not need to share the earlier mentioned characteristics of official religion.

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[73]. Bourdieu 1971a: 295-334; Bourdieu 1971b: 3-21. Bourdieu draws heavily on Weber in his discussion of the religious field.

[74]. Maduro 1979: 191.

[75]. Bourdieu 1971a: 303, 309; Bourdieu 1971b: 19-20.

[76]. The term "popular religion" has an ambiguous character because it may refer both to the religion of the laity in relation to official religion and to the religion of subordinated groups and classes in relation to the religion of the ruling groups and classes. The two meanings of the term need not coincide.

Religion not only changes its character within the process of modernization, its importance in society and its role in the life of social actors alters accordingly. This alteration points to the famous secularization, or the "loss of religion" thesis. Socio-religious bonds are vanishing and society is increasingly functioning in its own terms, subject to human reason, so this thesis holds.[77] Formulated in these general terms few social scientists would make objections to this thesis.

Objections have to be made, however, once we look closer at what is claimed here. To begin with, it is asserted that modern religion no longer deals with the ways social actors conceive of nature, social reality and themselves. Religion is seen as retreating to existential, moral and emotional issues. This assertion may be true, but it does not mean that religion would thereby lose its influence on social life. First of all, by dealing with existential questions religion may easily influence the identity construction of modern social actors, and thus interfere in social relations. Accepting answers provided by a Pentecostal church to questions such as the one concerning the meaning of life may induce a social actor to conceptualize social relations in terms of believers and non-believers and act accordingly.

Next, official modern religion has a strong moral character, which stimulates religious actors to act in a specific way with specific social consequences. Such consequences are also caused by the fact that religion may maintain an ideological character, either stimulating religious actors to change their social reality or legitimizing this reality. Finally, as has been indicated above, official religion does not exclude rationality. Official religion is based on uncontrollable presuppositions, but its discourse itself may have a rational and systematic character.

Seen from the institutional angle the "loss of religion" thesis holds that the increasing autonomization[78] of the various fields towards one another means that religion's influence on *e.g.* economy, politics and other fields is continuously diminishing. Each of these fields is ruled by a specific rationality which makes moral considerations simply irrelevant.[79] However, this argument does not rule out the possibility that moral and religious judgements may be very persistent in referring to problems created but not solved in these fields.[80] Examples of this persistence are provided by social inequality created in the economic field and oppression in the political field, judged to be incompatible with God's will, and thus calling for concerted action on the part of religious actors.

In short, the secularization thesis does not necessarily imply the loss of religious influence on social matters; religion adopts new ways of influencing social reality and religious discourse itself may adopt modern

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77. Robertson 1994: 127; Hervieu-Léger 1989; 71, 72.
78. Hervieu-Léger 1989: 71.
79. Hervieu-Léger 1989: 71; Beyer 1994: 82.
80. Beyer 1994: 80, 97; Séguy 1989: 9; Hervieu-Léger 1989: 72.

rational characteristics. The assumption that religion would be reduced to the private sphere[81] has to be rejected.

What is becoming privatized is not religion itself but religious decision-making. Decisions as to what to believe and to do are increasingly taken by the individuals themselves. Within the contemporary modern framework of reflexivity, relativization and increasing religious pluralism the individual is increasingly impelled to reflect upon the question of which meaning to accept or practice to perform.[82] In the face of these features of globalization, religion has two possible ways of responding. On the one hand religion can maintain its linkage and identification to a specific national or regional cultural particularism, rejecting its relativization and heading for fundamentalism. On the other hand religion may take an ecumenical position and adopt a flexible attitude, open to external influences and current social trends[83]: a creolizing religious response.

In this ecumenical and creolizing case the institutional side of religion is almost bound to disappear. In a society centred on the individual, in which social relations become atomized, every religious meaning is constructed by the individual in subjective and do-it-yourself ways. Religion becomes highly atomized, shattered and pulverized, which leads to a kaleidoscope of significations and to a mismatched conglomerate of indeterminate beliefs, like ungraspable odds-and-ends of reminiscences and dreams.[84] Religion not only adopts a plural, but also a highly fragmented character.

In this context the role of religious specialists becomes very questionable. Any structuration of contemporary shattered religious representations and practices and their aggregation into organized belief systems become almost impossible tasks. Religious actors selectively take what they like from different religious suppliers without religious institutions being able to control them. Religion will find it increasingly difficult to maintain a field-like character. Not only are the nation-state and national society increasingly confronted with serious obstacles to continuing their roles as institutional frameworks for culture and religion; the same holds true in the case of the religious field.

Commoditization

As was outlined above, modernization means that economic relations and nature are no longer seen in a personalized way, as relations between visible and non-visible persons. Human activity is no longer conceived of as something given in the nature of things or by divine providence. Instead, in

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[81]. Beyer 1994: 72.
[82]. Beyer 1994: 76.
[83]. Beyer 1994: 103.
[84]. Hervieu-Léger 1989: 71, 75, 76, drawing especially on Luckmann.

a modern condition human activity is perceived as something socially created. Nature is not only domesticated but also becomes the object of formal rationality in order to maximize economic production and profit. Economy develops into a distinct field and the division of labour reaches ever higher levels of sophistication.

The transition from a pre-modern to a modern condition further includes a shift of emphasis from agricultural to industrial and tertiary activities. In pre-modern society the majority of communities are rural and live primarily on agriculture, while modernity supposes industrialization and urbanization. However, there is agricultural modernization as well, which entails the rise of capitalist production relations to a predominant position. In principle, there are two ways towards the separation of capital and labour and the integration into the market economy: the so-called *Junker*-way and the peasant-way. The former refers to large pre-capitalist estates partially transforming themselves into efficient market-oriented production units and making use of large numbers of wage labourers. The latter points to peasants who improve their cash crop production, gradually enlarge their land holdings and, if necessary, hire wage labourers.

Whatever the road to capitalism, modernization in agriculture includes first of all the shift from subsistence production - *i.e.* the major part of production is consumed by the same household or local community - to market-oriented production and market integration. Secondly, indigenous technology is supplanted by scientifically elaborated technology and other inputs are bought at the market. Thirdly, communitarian ways of land control give way to strictly individual - or household - ownership of and control over the land. Fourthly, economic stratification and differential access to land increase considerably within the local community. Finally, communitarian and group-wise[85] labour disappear: labour is individualized and extra labour is paid for. It becomes abstracted from real persons and freed from extra-economic force. Like other production factors labour becomes a commodity that has to be paid for.[86]

Production factors not only become commoditized, within the context of globalization they increasingly move across the globe. Local production becomes integrated into the world economy, which means that in part they can interrelate with these flows of capital, labour and technology, and new markets are potentially opened up. On the other hand, this integration may also result in increased competition and local production may run out of business. In the latter case local consumers may run short of cash to buy the new consumer goods from other parts of the world that become available. Globalization is about opportunities *and* risks, about new horizons *and* dangers, about prosperity *and* poverty.

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[85]. For a discussion of group-wise labour see Chapter seven.
[86]. Giddens 1990: 6, 34, 60-62.

1.5 Three configurations of modernization

On the basis of this outline of processes of modernization a characterization can be made of the three basic configurations within these processes: the pre-modern condition or the starting point of modernization, the originally modern condition and the contemporary modern condition. These conditions are ideal-typical constructions that emphasize specific aspects or characteristics. These ideal-typical constructions are almost never neatly reflected in historical processes, and it cannot be stressed enough that no linear or homogeneous form of transition or logic is necessarily implied. I will return to this issue in the final chapter.

The pre-modern condition

In a pre-modern configuration i) social life is encompassed in the local community and kinship systems; ii) economics, politics, social relations, religion and other spheres of life are inextricably intertwined; iii) the emphasis is on agriculture and rural life; iv) subsistence production is stressed; v) technology is indigenous; vi) land is controlled in a communitarian way; vii) communitarian and group-wise labour are dominant; viii) the local community has a low level of economic stratification; ix) human activity is conceived of as given by nature and providence; x) religion plays an important role in the conceptions the social actors have of their own identity, nature and social relations; xi) religion has a partial and immediate character in which the manipulation of supernatural powers, who are considered to be arbitrary, is central; xii) the functioning of society depends on trust in persons and on personal interactions; xiii) society is marked by stratified differentiation.

The originally modern condition

In the early or originally modern condition i) communication is no longer limited to the local context; ii) economics, arts, politics, science, religion etc. are separated and specialize into fields or functional sub-systems and become subject to professionalization; iii) the individual is positioned within a plurality of subject positions; iv) the emphasis is on urban life and on industrial activity; v) production relations are capitalist; vi) production is oriented towards the market and inputs for production are bought in the market; vii) technology is elaborated in a scientific way; viii) there is individual or household control of the land; ix) the emphasis is on individual and wage labour; x) there is considerable economic stratification at the local level; xi) production factors, including labour, are commoditized; xii) the actor increasingly uses external information and knowledge in order to understand and change the surrounding social and natural reality; xiii) actors put their trust in abstract systems, many relations between

individuals become functional and organizations and institutions secure the reproduction of society; xiv) there is a process of individualization in relation to the rise of associative structures such as class-based organizations; xv) society is linked to the nation-state; xvi) within national borders cultural homogeneity becomes the rule, promoting national social integration.

Moreover, xvii) religion supports this construction of national culture; xviii) a religious field comes into being with a division of labour between specialists and lay actors; xix) official religion adopts a rational and systematical character emphasizing moral behaviour; it proclaims a universal and absolute validity, formulates abstract and long-term goals and portrays God as righteous and trustworthy; xx) there is a tension between official and popular or lay religion; xxi) nature and social reality are increasingly conceived in profane terms, but religion maintains social influence through its role in identity construction, moral behaviour and the ideology of groups and individuals, and relevant social action oriented at problems created but not solved in other fields; xxii) the ideological role of religion is undetermined.

The contemporary modern condition

In the contemporary modern circumstance most of these characteristics of original modernity remain valid, but some are modified and new features are added. These modified and complemented qualities include i) the extension of communication in global networks; ii) the sophistication of the international division of labour; iii) the increasing importance of tertiary activities; iv) the crystallization of the international system of nation-states; v) the construction of culture and identity not only at the levels of the individual and society but also at the level of the system of societies and human kind; vi) the questioning of the nation-state based on a national culture because states are increasingly marked by cultural pluralism and a national integrating culture or moral order collapses; vii) increasing cultural and religious relativization and pluralism which includes the revival of ethnicity and ethnic groups; viii) the formulation of fundamentalist and creolizing religious and cultural answers to relativization; ix) the fragmentation of life-worlds and views on the world and on one's self on the part of individuals; x) the fragmentation of social inequality; xi) the privatization of religious, cultural and moral choices; xii) the shattered character of religion and the collapse of organized belief systems; xiii) the resulting questioning of the role of religious institutions and specialists and the field character of religion.

1.6 Central research questions

After having made explicit the modernization perspective the central research questions that guide this book will be presented. These questions are grouped into two clusters. First of all, can the various aspects of Q'eqchi' social reality be classified into the categories of pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern? Is the above outlined concept of modernization useful in order to understand this social reality? Can it serve the purpose of translating my data into the social science vocabulary of modernization? Secondly, if so, how do the Q'eqchi'es interact with pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern phenomena in the face of present-day processes of globalization and localization? Does the concept of modernization tell us something about the historical perspective of the Q'eqchi'es? In other words, are the Q'eqchi'es to be found somewhere along the way in a process of modernization, or have they found specific ways to deal with pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern elements?

1.7 Tools and methods of research

Before discussing these questions some specifications have to be made. This book will not try to be exhaustive in the analysis of Q'eqchi' social reality. In Chapter Two a short historical background and an outline of a variety of elements belonging to the life-worlds of the Q'eqchi'es will be presented, but this book focuses mainly on two basic issues: Q'eqchi' religion and economy. These two issues are related to a large part of their activities in daily life and thus present an excellent test case for answering the questions raised above. My analysis of these issues will be guided by some central concepts which appear in every chapter and which clarify the approach I adopted in studying Q'eqchi' religion and economy. In the following pages these conceptual tools will be discussed first. Next, some methodological aspects of my fieldwork among the Q'eqchi'es in 1991 and 1992 will be dealt with.

1.7.1 *Conceptual tools*

The "structure" versus "agency" dilemma that has puzzled the mind of many a social scientist, has resulted in countless efforts to deal systematically with the matter. However, we are still far from having solved the problem. I see no reason to cry out "Eureka" either, but I am trying to find a balance between the two points of view to look at Q'eqchi' social reality. Inspired by Giddens' theory of structuration we may describe the "agency" point of view as stressing the fact that within limits the Q'eqchi'es are "knowledgeable" and "capable", *i.e.* they are able to learn from and know about social and natural reality and act accordingly in order to change this

reality. The "structure" point of view refers to the limiting or determining impact of structuring social relations and discourses and natural conditions on the actions and representations of the Q'eqchi'es.[87]

My analysis of Q'eqchi' social reality is organized using pairs of concepts that combine both of these approaches. The first concept of these pairs points to "structure" while the latter fits rather with the "agency" point of view. The pairs of concepts that will be presented here include field and life-world, intervening agencies and "ordinary" social actors, habitus and meaning-making, power and strategies. No effort has been made to reach once-and-for-all definitions of these concepts in order to freeze conceptions of social reality. Instead, these concepts have been used as points of view to look at social reality that make one aware of specific aspects to the detriment of others. The use of complementary concepts tries to guarantee a more balanced view of the social phenomena under scrutiny.

Field and life-world

The conceptual pair "field" and "life-world" neatly reflects the "structure" and "agency" points of view. The concept of field stems from structural Marxist or functionalist approaches and alludes to objective dimensions of social reality: social relations that constrain the actions of social actors or impel them to do something or to think in some way. In line with the above outlined definitions of field (Bourdieu) and functional sub-systems (Luhmann and Beyer) a working definition of the concept of field will be used in this book referring to a dimension of society (regional, national or global) which is made up of structured positions related by asymmetrical power relations, such as those between specialists and "ordinary" social actors. This space is characterized by a very specific category of practices which differentiate it from other fields, *e.g.* economic or religious practices.[88]

By contrast, the concept of life-world refers to the subjective dimension of social reality, the ways the social actor looks at social reality and tries to change it. It is centred on the actor and from the actor's point of view on the other actors, agencies and natural reality he or she is confronted with. It focuses on the actor's experiences of them and on the ways he or she tries to understand and categorize them and interact with them. The

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[87]. Long 1992: 22*ff* drawing especially on Giddens, A., *The Constitution of Society: an Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1984.

[88]. Of course, in analyzing Q'eqchi' social reality the use of the field concept, itself inscribed in the context of original modernity, may produce a bias in this analysis in terms of favouring conclusions that confirm a possible originally modern characterization of Q'eqchi' social reality. In order to rule out this bias, at the start of the analysis of every issue - religion and economy - the question will be raised whether it can be classified in terms of fields according to the criteria outlined here. The intertwined or separated character of religion and economy will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

social actor organizes and orders his or her knowledge about his or her life-world.[89] One of the important classifications the actor makes within his or her life-world is that between the social group and geographical units the actor primarily identifies with - "us" - and the groups and geographical units he or she does not identify with - "them".

Intervening actors and agencies, and "ordinary" social actors

Intervening actors and agencies are important channels for transmitting structural influences to the "ordinary" social actors. These intervening actors and agencies have their origin outside the life-world of the "ordinary" social actors and intervene in this life-world. They present themselves as specialists and communicate flows of meanings to these social actors that stem from a wider context and claim the right to influence the practices and meanings of the "ordinary" social actors. For example, the various churches in the Q'eqchi' region have their origin outside this region and claim authority over the Q'eqchi'es on religious matters.[90]

Many practices are decided upon and many representations are constructed within interfaces between intervening agencies and other specialists on the one hand and the "ordinary" social actors on the other. In general the outcome of these interfaces cannot be reduced either to the plans and meanings promoted by the intervening agencies and actors, or to the objectives and intentions of the "ordinary" actors. Something new comes into being which may be characterized as a process of creolization. Consequently, the "ordinary" social actors are not just passive victims of external influences of specialists and intervening actors and agencies.

Habitus and meaning-making

Within their room for manoeuvre the social actors are imbued with "agency". They construct their own representations and meanings concerning themselves, their natural surroundings and the social reality they live in. These meanings induce the actors to take action, to decide on practices in order to change or reproduce their context and themselves. The result of these practices impels them to further reflection. Meanings and representations become integrated in discourse. Such a discourse may be rational or coherent, but also contradictory, fragmented and inconsistent.

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[89]. See Arce, Long 1992: 212-214.

[90]. This discussion of intervening agencies is based on Long 1992: 16-43. However, Long uses the term mainly referring to development agencies, while here the concept is enlarged and linked to the concept of field so as to include *e.g.* churches in the religious field.

Not every practice is guided by explicit meanings or intentions. As Bourdieu has convincingly pointed out,[91] many of the social actor's practices are directed by an internalization of the social actor's experiences in the past. In his or her interplay with social structure the social actor builds up a series of dispositions in his or her lifetime which implicitly direct the social actor's practices. Even the meaning of some of the most important practices cannot be made explicit by asking respondents about their meanings: they "go without saying" and remain implicit. Taking into consideration Bourdieu's contribution[92] I would say that explicit meanings or implicit dispositions - or more likely a mixture of both - lie at the heart of every practice.

It is not easy to make the concepts of habitus and dispositions operational. You cannot just go up to someone and ask about his or her habitus. Nevertheless, the habitus point of view has specific consequences for empirical research. It means that in trying to understand the sense of a social actor's practice, we must look not only at explicit meanings expressed by respondents in answer to our questions. Often the sense of a practice remains implicit and has to be deduced by the researcher. In addition to asking the respondents about this sense, the researcher also has to make sense of the various practices of the respondents. It is the researcher making sense of other people making sense and performing practices. Of course, this making sense on the part of the researcher opens up considerable space for interpretation on his or her part, but he or she is required to proceed in a systematic way and to make his or her interpretations as explicit and controllable as possible.

Religious rituals[93] are a perfect example of practices that are directed by a mix of explicit meanings and implicit dispositions. In this book religion will be conceptualized as an aggregate - whether coherent and systematic or not - of representations and practices that refer to a world of gods, spirits and other invisible beings. This reference is not always explicit or apparent to every participant in a religious practice. However, in this study practices are listed as religious when the majority of respondents refer to them as

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[91] Bourdieu 1972.

[92]. Bourdieu himself barely acknowledges the importance of explicit meaning-making which in his view is also guided by habitus.

[93]. The terms "ritual" and "religious practice" will be used interchangeably. Of course, there is considerable debate about whether rituals ought to be conceived of as a very specific category of social practices. This debate raises questions concerning their enforced or voluntary character, their rational or non-rational features, their emphasis on performance instead of meaning and their role in social integration. All these issues are interesting and important, but I consider them to be relevant to religious practices in general and not just to a specific category of religious practices called rituals. For the purpose of my analysis the use of a more open concept of religious practices, drawing attention to both their implicit and explicit aspects, has turned out to be profitable. In such a general way I use both the words religious practice and rituals. For an excellent discussion of the debate on rituals among anthropologists see Boudewijnse 1995.

such either in the interviews I conducted with them or in verbal expressions during the performance of the practice.

Of course, as a researcher I cannot make any statements about the "reality" or the "truth" of the representations the actors construct about themselves and their social and natural reality. This holds true not just for religious representations but for all representations. The social actors' representations are the starting point of research, not the question of whether these representations are true or not.

Power and strategies

Habitus points to the internalization of past experiences of dealing with social structure, which directs the present day practices of social actors. Habitus thus constitutes one way in which social structure influences the practices of social actors. Another consists of the fact that in constructing their representations, social actors make use of the discourse, meanings, symbols, and concepts that are at hand, *i.e.* that are offered to them by the media, intervening agencies, education and so on. Moreover, there is power: the capacity of some social actors to influence the practices and representations of other actors. As has been made clear, these power relations are especially relevant in the framework of a field, *i.e.* among various groups and factions of specialists, and between specialists and "ordinary" social actors. In a modern context a social actor is always immersed in various fields and so has to do with several power relations.

Following Antonio Gramsci's analysis of power relations in class society, two forms of domination may be distinguished: direct domination and hegemony.[94] In the case of direct domination the ruling group uses force or coercive practices to prevent the dominated groups from taking action that might change the existing power relations. However, any ruling group prefers to avoid the use of force and tries to establish a more stable form of domination: hegemony. In this case the dominated groups accept or approve the situation of asymmetrical power relations. The dominant groups rule in an ideological way. They promote an ideology that either obscures or legitimates the existing power relations and creates a consensus among the dominated groups.

Hegemony is not only based on ideological domination. It may also have its fundament in what Gramsci calls the common way of thinking of dominated groups. This way of thinking may prevent the dominated groups from working out a clear social and political alternative. In addition, social actors may not be interested primarily in changing existing power relations. Dominated groups may not agree with the existing power relations, but as

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[94]. For a more detailed elaboration on the issue of power see Droogers, Siebers 1991: 1-25, drawing on the distinctions Althusser and Poulantzas make between ideological state apparatus and repressive apparatus.

long as they fail to work out a clear alternative, hegemony is consolidated.[95]

While power relations may be asymmetrical, they are almost never absolute. Social actors maintain a limited but real room for manoeuvre in which to develop and practise their own strategies. In this book the concept of strategy will be used to indicate the main characteristics of the ways social actors try to achieve basic goals in their life-world, such as material survival or economic improvement. It refers to the fundamental principles of dealing with problems such as illness and poverty or relations with the world of gods and spirits. The way the concept of strategy is used in this book not only points to explicit intentions or calculations, it also alludes to habitus and implicit dispositions as sources of the basic practices that make up a strategy.

1.7.2 *Research methods*

As was mentioned above, the Bishop of the diocese of Verapaz and several officials of diocesan institutions invited me to conduct the fieldwork that resulted in this book. They were mainly interested in the relations between the religion and development strategies of the Q'eqchi'es and the impact of the church's pastoral work on this religion and these strategies. However, I was immediately confronted with the problem that the clergy's aim was to know more about the Q'eqchi'es as such, while significant research on religious representations and practices for example ought to focus on local communities. I was faced with the macro-micro dilemma.

In order to deal with this problem I divided my fieldwork into two stages. In stage one I mapped the whole Q'eqchi' region in terms of geographic, demographic, economic, social, health care, educational, political and religious characteristics. I subdivided the region into 27 areas in all of which I interviewed spokesmen who had an overview of at least some of these characteristics in their area. These spokesmen included priests, religious women, catechists, evangelical leaders, agricultural extension workers, health care workers and teachers. Letters of introduction from the Bishop and the University helped to gain the confidence of these people and the questions I asked were focused both on the characteristics of the area they worked in and on their specific work and strategies. Very little reliable statistical material was available.[96]

In stage two I selected a number of local communities to study in further detail. The selection criteria included isolation versus proximity to

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[95]. See Brink, van den 1978: 20-21.

[96]. For example, the 1979 census, the latest in the region, indicated 8686 square kilometres for the department of Alta Verapaz. Counting the various categories that are used in the census the total amount of land reaches 7736.389 square kilometres, so 10.9 per cent of the territory of Alta Verapaz seems to have disappeared.

towns, geographic spread, the level of market integration, presence or absence of evangelical churches[97] and the kind of pastoral work engaged in by the Catholic church. These criteria arose from the first stage of my fieldwork as the most important ones to take into account when selecting communities for further study. The use of these criteria as well as the level of representativity of the communities selected will be discussed in the next chapter.

The representativity of the communities selected constitutes the main link between the regional and the local levels of analysis. It allows me to approach the main characteristics of the religion and economic strategies of the Q'eqchi'es, their interfaces with intervening agencies and specialists, and the main variations in these strategies and interfaces. This book deals with the main characteristics and variations in the Q'eqchi' religion and economy that can be deduced from the material collected at the regional level as well as from selected local material. However, the reader should bear in mind that it is not my purpose to make rather old-fashioned once-and-for-all generalizations about the Q'eqchi'es. Formulations such as 'The Q'eqchi'es believe...' or 'The Q'eqchi' economic strategies include...' refer to the material thus collected which does express some level of representativity, but this book does not pretend to cover all or even most of the details of religious and economic practices and meanings each Q'eqchi' is performing or constructing. Throughout my fieldwork and the analysis of my data I have tried to keep in mind the level of representativity and scope of the material I have collected. The initial construction of a regional overview greatly helped me to evaluate the representativity of data I collected subsequently in the various local communities.[98]

The research methods used in the local communities included systematic observation and interviews. In the presentation of material in the chapters that follow it will be made clear which information stems from interviews and which data result from my observations. I made these observations of some of the important religious and social practices. For example, I made a detailed examination of what was being done in religious

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[97]. The Catholic church has established a presence in almost all local communities.

[98]. As regards questions of representativity I have tried to be as explicit as possible in order to avoid the confusion that marks Wilson's presentations about the Q'eqchi'es. Writing about the Q'eqchi'es in general Wilson repeatedly mixes up the various levels of analysis: the Q'eqchi' areas that have suffered from massive army violence, the department of Alta Verapaz which includes not only Q'eqchi'es but also other ethnic groups, the Q'eqchi' region which goes beyond the department of Alta Verapaz and the indigenous population of Guatemala as a whole (Wilson 1995). He collected data mainly in the violence-ridden areas especially among leaders such as catechists and indigenous healers, but frequently generalizes his findings and writes about the Q'eqchi'es in general. In the next chapter the fact that some one hundred of the 1600 local Q'eqchi' communities have suffered from massive army violence will be discussed.

rituals. I instructed my interpreter beforehand[99] to listen closely and to explain me afterwards in summary what was being said. Then I conducted interviews with the leading persons and with some of the participants in the ritual.

The various local community leaders were interviewed about their role in the community and were asked for general information about the community. However, the main source of information was the interviews conducted in various households. In each local community either almost all or at least half of the households were visited in order to conduct an interview with the man and, if possible, the woman of the household.

A reliable introduction into the community turned out to be absolutely crucial. This introduction was secured by way of the parish priest who had been instructed by the Bishop to cooperate. The priest introduced me to the catechists of the village who presented me to the Catholic part of the local community. After visiting the community several times and talking to local leaders I gradually took the initiative of asking them whether it was possible to visit the villagers in their homes.

The fact that I started with the Catholics created suspicion on the part of the evangelicals in the community; but after the household interviews with Catholics had started I became a familiar sight in the village and was able to express an open attitude. The evangelicals gradually responded by adopting an open attitude as well and invited me to visit them too. They did not want to stay behind or be left out.

In conducting the household interviews my interpreter and I were always received by the man of the house, but after some time I always tried to include the woman in the conversation in order to prevent a male bias in the answers I got. In communities close to towns and infrastructure this inclusion was possible; in more isolated communities it was very difficult to achieve. In general the atmosphere was relaxed and the respondents were willing to tell me many things that would have been quite delicate or even controversial if expressed at a meeting of the whole community.

In these interviews I began by asking what they do as far as religion and economy are concerned. Their answers served as a starting point for asking what they think about these practices in order to slowly enter the realm of their representations. This method allowed me to find out the relevant practices in the village and in the various households, who participates in which practice and why, what they think of each practice, what the role of intervening actors and agencies is, what the main symbols mean to them, how they conceive of themselves and their natural and social context and what they think about the main issues at stake in each community. In order to detect these issues I carried out several pilot

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[99]. My general knowledge of the Q'eqchi' language was sufficient to have daily conversations with the Q'eqchi'es, but in conducting interviews I preferred to rely on an interpreter.

interviews which helped me to formulate the questions for subsequent household interviews. In total eight local communities were studied, four of which feature prominently in this book because they respond to the selection criteria outlined above and the material collected in these communities is well suited for analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AND LIFE-WORLDS OF THE Q'EQCHI'ES

2.1 Introduction

The geographical unit under scrutiny in this study is the Q'eqchi' region, a term which will be used to refer to those places in which the Q'eqchi'es constitute by far a majority of the population. Very few Q'eqchi'es can be found outside of this region which covers parts of several Guatemalan departments. It includes most of the department of Alta Verapaz except for the municipalities of Tactic, San Cristóbal, Santa Cruz, and Tamahú because a large majority of the population of these municipalities consist of *Poqomchi'es* (see Map 1). A majority of the population of the municipality of Purulhá, which belongs to the department of Baja Verapaz, are Q'eqchi'es. The north-eastern part of the department of El Quiché, known as Playa Grande and Lancetillo, is populated by Q'eqchi'es and the same holds true for the southern part of the department of El Petén and the northern part of the department of Izabal.

The average municipality consists of one central town with anywhere between thirty to several hundred of rural communities surrounding it. These rural communities may be subdivided into *fincas*, villages and cooperatives. A finca is a large estate whose production is market-oriented, it is usually privately owned and includes a community of permanent land labourers. A rural community which has access to land that is not owned by a landlord and in which individual households have access to a specific piece of land is usually called "*aldea*", or village. A cooperative holds its land in collective ownership.

The various sub-regions that can be distinguished include the Q'eqchi' heartland, the Polochic Valley and the *Franja Transversal del Norte* (see Map 3). The heartland covers the areas around the central towns of Santo Doningo Cobán, San Pedro Carchá, San Juan Chamelco and Santa María Cahabón. The Polochic river flows through an area that encompasses the municipalities of Tucurú and Panzós (which includes the areas of La Tinta and Telemán), and parts of Purulhá and El Estor. The Franja Transversal del Norte consists of the strip of land stretching from the Caribbean coast to the northern part of the department of Huehuetenango. The Q'eqchi' areas of the Franja include the northern parts of Izabal and of Alta Verapaz, and the north-eastern part of El Quiché. The latter part is also referred to as Ixcán.

To the Q'eqchi'es the place they live in is not just the sum of available natural resources and social actors that make up their environment, to be

easily exchanged for another place. Instead, they identify with the geographical surroundings in which they have formed a community. The place they live in is the location of their identity and a stage for their religious practices and meanings; it has a sacred character for them.[1] Consequently, the term "Q'eqchi' region" points to the places in which the Q'eqchi'es live as well as to the sites with which the various Q'eqchi'es have developed a special relationship.

It is here that the Q'eqchi'es interact with one another, but this region is also the site where they interface with non-Q'eqchi' actors and agencies. The Q'eqchi'es have limited experiences outside of this region including pilgrimages to Esquipulas (see Chapter Four) and incidental trips to the capital to solve their land title problems. Communication with the outside world mainly takes place through interfaces with intervening actors and agencies in the region such as churches, radio stations, merchants, government agencies or the army.

This structure of communication is directly related to the isolated character of the region and the very poor quality of the infrastructure. There are only two paved roads into the region (see Map 3) and these are connected to a limited number of dirt roads. Buses run on a regular basis to the capital from central towns such as Cobán and Poptún. In most of the central towns of the municipalities a bus leaves for or arrives from Cobán or another central town once or twice a day, but from some towns such as Chisec and Sayaxché there is no bus connection at all. A large majority of local communities are not connected to any road. Most of the Q'eqchi'es have to walk for hours or even days to reach a road.

In short, the Q'eqchi' region is made up of the aggregate of places the Q'eqchi'es live in, identify with and in which they engage in interfaces with intervening actors and agencies. It points to their life-worlds. The objective of this chapter is to outline some of the characteristic aspects of these life-worlds such as their household and community life, their identity constructions, their dealings with intervening agencies and their position within the fields of education and politics. It is these specific aspects of their life-worlds which provided the basis for selecting four local communities that play a central role in this book. These characteristics will be related to the central research questions in the concluding chapter. Before discussing these characteristics a brief outline of the history of the Q'eqchi'es will be presented because such an outline is indispensable for understanding the present-day features of the Q'eqchi' life-worlds.

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[1]. For a more detailed discussion of their relations to the sacred landscape see Chapter Four.

2.2 Historical background of the Q'eqchi'es

Colonial times

The peoples living in the areas that now make up the Q'eqchi' region were no easy victims of the Spanish colonizers. The largest group, the Q'eqchi'es, were effectively organized around their supreme commander, the *cacique de los caciques*, the leader of the local leaders.[2] After several military defeats the Spaniards called this region *Tezulutlán*, or Land of the Warriors. They also decided this area would be a perfect setting for Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, known for his pleas in favour of human treatment of the *Indios*, to try out his peaceful approach. He accepted the challenge and with three fellow Dominicans he travelled to the region in 1537. To the surprise of many Spanish warriors, he easily managed to baptize the rulers of the *Rabibal Achi'es*, the Poqomchi'es and the Q'eqchi'es in these areas. Impressed by the Dominicans' success, the Spanish king decided to change the name of this area into *Vera Paz, i.e.* True Peace, to erect the independent bishopric of Vera Paz in 1559 and to install the first Bishop. This ecclesiastical move turned out to be rather optimistic as by 1607 or 1608, the bishopric had already been dissolved and the region was included in the bishopric of Guatemala.[3]

For a century and a half the Q'eqchi' heartland in the highlands was the frontier area of Spanish influence. The jungle covered lowlands to the east and the north were sparsely populated by wandering groups of *Ch'oles, Lakandones, Akala'es, Maya-Mopanes* and *Itza'es*. Supported by the Q'eqchi' leaders, the Spaniards tried several times to invade these areas but only succeeded in 1696 when they celebrated their final victory over the Itza'es and Lakandones. The Akala'es died out at the end of the seventeenth century and the Ch'oles suffered the same fate two centuries later.[4]

The effects of conversion and colonization among the Q'eqchi'es should not be overestimated. The Dominicans were mainly concerned with the administration of sacraments and the collection of revenues, while the Q'eqchi'es maintained their religious beliefs and practices.[5] In political terms the changes introduced by the Spaniards were not very radical either. The Spaniards confirmed customary laws and the authority of the caciques in the villages. The cacique de los caciques was integrated in the colonial administration and was even granted the right to imprison Spaniards suspected of crimes.[6]

The economic effects of colonization were relatively limited as well. Q'eqchi' communities maintained access to most of their community lands.

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[2]. AVANCSO, n.d.(b): 2-3.
[3]. AVANCSO n.d.(b): 4-7; Sapper 1936: 7, 8, 27.
[4]. Sapper 1936: 40, 44-46.
[5]. Sapper 1936: 23, 24, 29.
[6]. Sapper 1936: 8; AVANCSO n.d.(b): 10, 12, 16.

In addition, only the Dominicans and the crown possessed lands, not individual Spaniards.[7] Neither were individual Spaniards involved in the collection of tribute as the Spanish crown, represented by the *Alcalde Mayor* of Cobán, gathered tribute directly. The infamous *encomienda* system granting individual Spaniards the right to collect tribute from a certain number of Indians was not applied. In many ways the tribute to the crown was an extension of the goods and services which the Q'eqchi'es had to pay to their caciques before the Spanish conquest. The Dominicans even made sure that no slavery existed in the Q'eqchi' area and that women were exempted from labour services.[8]

The Spanish policy of concentrating the population into towns, the so-called *reducciones*, was not very successful either among the Q'eqchi'es. In 1571 there were 2,364 tribute paying families registered in the six Q'eqchi' towns. However, to cite just one case, the houses of San Pedro Carchá were deserted for most of the year because its inhabitants lived in their fields. There was a constant movement of Q'eqchi'es fleeing from the towns and looking for a piece of land in outlying areas.[9]

The epidemics which recurrently afflicted the population had more serious consequences for the Q'eqchi'es. For example, according to Spanish sources the number of tribute paying families in the whole of Verapaz diminished from over 7,000 to 3,135 in the years after 1561, a drop which they attributed to illness.[10] Yet, these sources do not allow us to conclude that the effects of epidemics were worse after the arrival of the Spaniards than before that time.

In short, the limited historical evidence available does not support the Martínez Peláez thesis[11] which emphasizes a rupture between pre-conquest Maya culture and colonial Indian culture, the latter being the result of colonial relations of production imposed by the Spaniards. Instead, the Q'eqchi' region clearly illustrates the limits to colonial rule in the Indian highlands of Guatemala. In these areas colonial administration was carried out almost exclusively through three religious orders: the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Mercedarians. These orders accounted for almost the entire Spanish presence in these areas. This was so because they successfully claimed that these Indian areas had to maintain their missionary status. As long as Indians remained different from the Spanish colonizers in culture and language, then the orders were able to legitimize their presence in the Indian highlands. This presence was contested by the secular clergy and the Spanish state who wanted to expand their influence over these areas. The

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7. Oss, van 1986: 77; AVANCSO n.d.(b): 22; Woodward 1990: 69.
8. AVANCSO n.d.(b): 2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 22.
9. Sapper 1936: 23, 24, 28.
10. Sapper 1936: 29.
11. Martínez Peláez 1971.

orders were not interested in the hispanization of the Indians and effectively kept many of these areas isolated from the influence of other Spaniards.[12]

This key position of the orders guaranteed the Indian population of Guatemala an important level of continuity in economic, social and religious terms. To be sure, the Indians were subjected to all sorts of levies which added up to considerable amounts of money and goods. However, to be able to collect these levies the friars had an interest in the maintenance of the economic base of the Indians.[13]

In addition, the friars did not try to supplant the existing social and religious hierarchies within the Indian communities. They preferred to use these structures to organize their practices, thereby reinforcing these same structures. The rapid spread and success[14] of the *cofradías* is a good example of this continuity. Existing hierarchies within the communities were used to organize these confraternities which were dedicated to the worship of a specific saint, the maintenance of a church, mutual aid and the organization of funerals.[15]

The rapid spread of cofradías is not an unequivocal indication of the success of Catholic penetration in the Indian highlands. The Indians accepted Catholicism, but during the whole colonial period Spanish sources complained about the superficial nature of conversion and the continuation of ideas and practices which they labelled as paganism and idolatry.[16] The Indian communities maintained a relatively autonomous position vis-à-vis the colonial church and state.[17]

The Liberal Reform

At first, independence from Spain in 1823 had no significant consequences for the Q'eqchi'es. However, serious consequences did emerge from the final victory of the liberal creole elite in their struggle with the conservatives at the time of the so-called Liberal Reform of 1871. First, it meant the expansion of the coffee economy requiring large amounts of land and forced labour from the Q'eqchi' communities. Secondly, the liberals significantly increased the repressive capacity of the state and third, they virtually destroyed the presence of the church and the protection which the Indian communities enjoyed thanks to the religious orders. Fourthly, the *ladino*-Indian contradiction that has been ravaging Guatemalan society to the present day, came into being as a result of the liberal transformations. Finally, Q'eqchi' religious institutions such as the cofradías recovered an

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[12]. Oss, van 1986: 51*ff*, 77, 128, 144; Smith 1990b: 14, 15.
[13]. Oss, van 1986: 112, 155-157, 183; Lutz, Lovell 1990: 41.
[14]. According to a Spanish source of 1637 there were ten or twelve of these confraternities in each town with no more than a hundred Indians: cited in Oss, van 1986: 89.
[15]. Oss, van 1986: 17, 21, 77, 89, 109*ff*.
[16]. Oss, van 1986: 21, 36, 149, 150.
[17]. Smith 1990b: 13.

increasing autonomy in practising religious rituals and constructing religious meanings.

One of the points of disagreement between the conservatives and the liberals was whether the new opportunities for the production and export of coffee had to be seized. Yet, already under conservative governments in the 1850s and 1860s, the first serious steps towards the creation of privately owned large estates - fincas dedicated to the large-scale production of coffee - had been taken. In 1862, 75 such fincas owned by Guatemalan citizens, were registered in the Q'eqchi' municipalities of Cobán, Carchá and Tucurú.[18]

The main impetus for the expansion of coffee fincas came after 1871 when the liberal government invited Germans to settle in the region and use their skills and invest their capital to set up fincas as well as the infrastructure they required. Trained in European commercial firms, they were keen to maximize their commercial performance. They started by buying an existing finca, optimizing its coffee production while at the same time getting hold of new lands. In addition, they invested heavily in infrastructure including a cart road, a railroad and a steamship line linking the central highlands around Cobán and Carchá along the Polochic valley and Lake Izabal, to the sea ports of Santo Tomás and Lívingston from where the coffee was exported (see Map 3). The Germans managed to make their fincas much more productive than Guatemalan finca owners.[19]

The expansion of the coffee economy was not limited to the Q'eqchi' region but had a nation-wide character. McCreery holds that the finca owners and the state were interested in the reproduction of the Indian communities' agriculture because they were meant to supply most of the country's food and to maintain the seasonal labourers during periods when they were not needed to work on the fincas. Hence, according to this view, the expansion of coffee fincas in the country as a whole did not drastically cut off the indigenous communities from their lands.[20]

Even if McCreery is right with respect to other parts of the country, the Q'eqchi' region presents a different picture. The expansion of the coffee fincas did have serious consequences for land ownership in the Q'eqchi' region at a very early stage. On the eve of the first world war 32 registered German finca owners owned 2,100 square kilometres of land, or 24.17 per cent of the territory of the department of Alta Verapaz.[21] A map drawn by the German geographer Karl Sapper in 1900 shows that the present pattern

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[18]. Woodward 1990: 69.
[19]. Wagner 1991: 173-226.
[20]. McCreery 1990: 106-107.
[21]. The department of Alta Verapaz covered almost all the Q'eqchi'es at that time, and had a limited number of Poqomchi' inhabitants. Wagner 1991: 204, 212.

of large landownership in Alta Verapaz had, by and large, been established by that time.[22]

Those who provided these lands were the municipal governments, the Dominicans and the Q'eqchi' communities. The latter lost their rights to the lands they had access to, but this does not mean that in practice these communities completely lost access. Fincas needed labour and the Q'eqchi'es were certainly not very willing to work on fincas. Moreover, labour was relatively scarce since the population of the whole department only just surpassed 100,000 in 1893.[23] To make the Q'eqchi'es work on the fincas a carrot-and-stick approach was applied. On the one hand, the finca owners' treatment was rather modest. They bought large areas of land not just to grow coffee but also to allow their labourers to cultivate a piece of land on the finca and grow food crops. As a reward for this access to land and a small wage, the Q'eqchi'es were required to work a limited number of days on the finca: about six days a month at the end of the nineteenth century.[24]

The state, on the other hand, took a much tougher position. It decreed and implemented several laws which forced the indigenous population of Guatemala to work not only for the finca owners - delivering 'the number of mozos considered to be necessary'[25] - but for the state as well. The *habilitación* system was the most infamous of all. Workers received payment in advance and paid off their debt with interest by working at the finca. Debts were handed down from parents to children. In practice this was a system of debt peonage.[26] In 1934 debt peonage was abolished by law but was soon replaced by the vagrancy law obliging every male Indian to carry a booklet in which the number of days he had worked for a finca owner or for the state was recorded. When he was unable to show that he had worked a minimum number of days - over a hundred days a year were often required - he could be put to work or immediately sent to jail.[27]

Next to Indian communities the church became another "supplier" of land to the coffee economy. Tensions between the state and especially the religious orders dated back to colonial times. These tensions were reinforced by liberal intentions of creating a secular state, to integrate the indigenous population into a national entity and to confiscate the lands belonging to the Indian communities and the church. To deal directly with the Indians the friars had to be removed. The massive attack on the church included confiscation of ecclesiastical property - the church was the largest landowner in the country - and the expulsion of the archbishop as well as all male religious orders. Religious ceremonies outside church buildings were

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22. Wagner 1991: 205.
23. Wagner 1991: 173, 181, 182, 193.
24. Wagner 1991: 182.
25. Cabarrús 1979: 113. The word *mozo* is used to denote a labourer.
26. Adams 1990: 141.
27. Adams 1990: 141-142; Cabarrús 1979: 116.

prohibited, the seminary was closed and education was secularized. The church virtually disappeared from the Indian highlands. In 1924 there were only 85 priests to look after church life in the whole country. Most of them were very old and lived in the capital.[28]

The contradictions opposing Q'eqchi' communities and the church to finca owners and the state were not the only ones resulting from the Liberal Reform. According to Carol Smith the reform and the expansion of the coffee economy can also be seen as the source of the contradiction between Indians and ladinos.[29] Before that time this contradiction did not exist in these terms. A structural differentiation between "redressed" Indians, mestizos and others who did not lead an Indian way of life on the one hand, and Indians on the other, emerged after 1871. In the coffee producing areas as well as in the Indian highlands, the ladinos were the ones who occupied the intermediary positions between the state and the white finca owners, and the Indian labour force and communities. They became the labour contractors, the finca administrators, the merchants, the middle rank army officers as well as the local representatives of the state such as the local *intendentes*, appointed by president Jorge Ubico in the 1930s to control the municipalities. This differentiation cannot be understood solely in class terms: it resulted in '... a new and virulent form of racism in Guatemala, much more powerful than that of the colonial period'[30] and was marked by fear and hatred.

The main reaction of the Guatemalan Indians to all these contradictions emerging in the wake of the 1871 reform was not to engage in open resistance. The inhabitants of San Pedro Carchá protested at the loss of community lands and revolted in 1864-1865 and again in 1878 or 1879. There was also a rebellion on the finca Campur in the 1890s[31], but in general open resistance was remarkably rare mainly because of the vast increase in the repressive capacity of the state.[32] The Indians' main response was to try to safeguard the relative autonomy of their local community life. This strategy is reflected in the fact that the construction of their identity was focused mainly on their local community and not so much on wider categories such as the ethnic group, let alone something like a national identity.[33]

This strategy was enhanced by the fact that the state was unable to develop more effective ways of controlling local community life than brutal repression on the one hand and by the reinforcement of local religious and

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[28]. Samandú, Siebers, Sierra 1990: 25-26.
[29]. Smith 1990c: 72-95. Usually the word ladino is used to identify someone who does not belong to one of the various Indian or Afro-Caribbean cultures in Guatemala. It is primarily a cultural and not a racial category.
[30]. Smith 1990c: 90. See also Cabarrús 1979: 113-118.
[31]. AVANCSO n.d.(b): 27; Sapper 1936: 44; Wagner 1991: 186; Cabarrús 1979: 113.
[32]. McCreery 1990: 111-113.
[33]. Smith 1990a: 263; Smith 1990b: 17-18.

social institutions on the other. In recruiting labour the state had to deal with existing hierarchies within the local communities who were to supply the required labour. Moreover in the virtual absence of priests and religious women, the cofradías and other local religious leaders enjoyed a near monopoly of the organization and promotion of religious practices. In religious terms the Indian communities were able to go their own way for decades without church intervention. Already in colonial times the cofradías tended to become indigenized or, in other words, to transform themselves from institutions introduced by the Spaniards into representatives and expressions of indigenous religion. After 1871 the cofradías became strong promoters and genuine representatives of the latter.[34]

Economic and demographic change in the Twentieth century

The mixed structure of fincas with considerable numbers of Q'eqchi' permanent labourers and nearby independent Q'eqchi' villages where Q'eqchi'es cultivated small plots of land - the so-called *latifundio-minifundio* system - has basically remained intact since the introduction of the coffee economy. Nevertheless, the economy of the Q'eqchi' region has experienced considerable changes since then. To begin with, the German finca owners were dispossessed during the second world war when the Guatemalan government joined the ranks of the allied nations. Much of their land was returned to them afterwards but some was distributed to new private owners and after 1968 several dozen dispossessed fincas were transformed into cooperatives.

Another change that has had a more lasting effect on the Q'eqchi'es has been the gradual disappearance of forced labour. Officially, the various laws on forced labour were abolished in 1945 by the government of Juan José Arévalo.[35] At the national level these laws were no longer needed to force the Indian population to work on the plantations. Economic necessity caused by the further expansion of large landownership, especially in the southern part of the country, and population growth left a growing number of Indians no other option than to seek additional income by doing wage labour on the fincas.

The Q'eqchi' heartland was slow to experience this change, and not only because of the isolation of the region. New export crops such as sugar cane and cotton which gave rise to an expansion of large landholdings in other parts of the country during the 1950s and 1960s, did not penetrate into the region and thus did not encroach upon the lands of the Q'eqchi'es. Here

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[34]. Samandú, Siebers, Sierra 1990: 26-27.

[35]. Jonas 1991: 24. This progressive government as well as its successor led by president Jácobo Arbenz Guzmán had no lasting effects on the Q'eqchi' region. Almost all of its reforms, with the notable exception of the abolition of the forced labour laws, were turned back after the coup of 1954.

population growth put pressure on the unequally distributed land later than in other parts of the country. In Alta Verapaz, the population increased from a little over 100,000 in 1893 to almost 260,000 in 1964.[36] However according to one of the priests who started to work in the area in the 1960s, the municipalities at that time were still forcing the Q'eqchi'es to work for them and on the fincas twelve hours a day, six days a week, and to accept a wage of 0.50 to 1 *quetzal*[37] a day.

Nevertheless the gradual relaxation of extra-economic force did allow the Q'eqchi'es in the villages to grasp new economic opportunities that presented themselves in the 1970s. The introduction of chemical fertilizers and the new export crop cardamom, a spice mainly used in Arab cuisine, allowed these villages to increase both their food and cash crop production in spite of the limited amount of land to which they had access. Some of these communities were able to earn considerable amounts of money when the price of a *quintal* (45.3 kilos) of cardamom reached 300 quetzales and the quetzal was at par with the US dollar.

Intimately linked to population growth and the relaxation of forced labour practices has been the increasing migration of Q'eqchi'es. Since the 1960s Q'eqchi'es have moved constantly from the heartland to the new settlement areas. Three major movements can be distinguished. A first and rather limited one crossed the Chixoy river into the areas of Lancetillo en Playa Grande which belong to the department of El Quiché. A second moved down the Polochic valley into the areas of La Tinta, Telemán, Panzós and El Estor, and finally to Río Dulce, Lívingston and Belize. A third movement found its way to the areas in the northern part of the municipality of Cobán, to Chisec, Raxruhá, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and Chahal, and finally to the areas of Sayaxché, San Luís and Poptún which belong to the department of El Petén (see Map 3).

As a result of the first movement, most of the available land in the Lancetillo and Playa Grande areas was occupied during the 1970s and 1980s. The other two movements took place in two phases. In a first phase, coinciding with the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, the lowlands in the Polochic valley and the El Estor area and the northern part of Alta Verapaz were populated. Since that time no more land has been available and newly arriving Q'eqchi'es either have to find a piece of land at ever higher altitudes on the slopes of the Sierra de las Minas or move on.

Isolated settlements in lowlands of the northern part of Izabal and the southern part of El Petén and Belice had been established in previous

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[36]. Wagner 1991: 173; Adams 1965: 31. For several decades population growth in Alta Verapaz remained considerably lower than the national average. Between 1950 and 1964 the population of Alta Verapaz increased by 2.4 per cent per annum, whereas the national yearly growth rate reached 3.1 per cent (Carter 1969: 2).

[37]. The *quetzal* is the local Guatemalan currency, at that time its rate was equal to the US dollar.

decades, but the main influx of Q'eqchi'es in these areas took place during the second phase from the end of the 1970s onwards. Q'eqchi'es built their communities after Guatemalan and Mexican companies[38] had cleared these areas and taken away almost all the precious hardwoods. Nowadays even in these areas there is hardly any land available and the first Q'eqchi' communities are appearing in areas further north.

Population growth and the scarcity of land have been important push factors to stimulate Q'eqchi'es to descend from the heartland and move to the lowland settlements, but these factors have not been the only ones. A large majority of migrants have come not from the villages, but from fincas.[39] Surplus labour has been expelled from these fincas, a phenomenon aggravated by the fact that several fincas have turned towards cattle raising with a resultant decrease in the demand for labour.

In addition, almost all of the more than one hundred Q'eqchi'es I interviewed in villages in the settlement areas and who had left a finca in the heartland told me of their deeply felt desire to be able to live as peasants working on their own lands. They wanted to look for a piece of land to which they would have permanent access, with which they could identify themselves, and which could become a source of religious meaning-making for them (see Chapter Four). In their eyes, mere access to a piece of land granted to them in usufruct on the finca does not satisfy this desire. This desire to reproduce themselves as peasants and to establish an identification with their land was precisely the motive behind the move to the settlement areas instead of remaining tied to the Q'eqchi' heartland. In many ways, fleeing from a finca in recent times is the contemporary equivalent to escaping from the reducciones in the colonial era.

Their desire to reproduce themselves as peasants also explains why urbanization has been limited among the Q'eqchi'es. The largest town in the area, Cobán, has only about 30,000 inhabitants and, in contrast to other ethnic groups, few Q'eqchi'es have migrated towards the capital. It was not only economic and demographic constraints which pushed the Q'eqchi'es towards the settlement areas but economic and cultural aspirations as well.

Individual families or groups of families who migrated usually reached a more or less permanent place only after several years. There, they joined with other Q'eqchi' families to form new communities and in general reproduced the economic and cultural characteristics which they knew from their places of origin. In the settlement areas they met with minorities of other ethnic groups, either because they were there already (4000 Maya-

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[38]. For strategic reasons supported by the army who wanted to destroy the hiding places of guerrilla movement.

[39]. There are no statistical data available, but this conclusion is based on the findings of Pedroni (Pedroni 1991), and is confirmed by my own interviews with respondents in the villages in the settlement areas and with respondents who have an overview of one or several areas in the region.

Mopanes in the town of San Luís Petén, as many *Garífunas* as well as a few hundred Hindu families in the town of Lívingston), or because they had migrated towards these areas as well (Poqomchi'es, *Rab'inal Achi'es*, *K'iche'es*, ladinos). In any case, there are very few mixed ethnic communities and Q'eqchi'es prefer to form communities with people of their own kind.

Besides these movements of permanent migration a considerable temporary migration has developed in recent years. Tens of thousands of Q'eqchi'es from the villages in the heartland travel to the settlement areas, especially to the northern part of Alta Verapaz, to work for some weeks for other Q'eqchi'es in their cardamom harvest or to rent a piece of land from other Q'eqchi'es on which to grow their maize and beans. These Q'eqchi'es in the settlement areas usually have access to more land than those of the highlands and are willing to let them use part of their land temporarily.

Land conflicts and violence

Nowhere has settlement been a smooth process. The state has tried to intervene in order to regulate and coordinate the process through institutions such as the *Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria* (INTA, provision of land titles) and the *Empresa de Fomento y Desarrollo del Petén* (FYDEP, development coordination in El Petén). It even worked out special settlement plans for the so-called Franja Transversal del Norte (see Map 3) but the results of government intervention have been very limited.[40]

Settlement has often been characterized by land conflicts because of lack of coordination. After having formed a community and cleared a piece of land, the Q'eqchi'es have very often been confronted with a *finquero* (finca owner) waving some sort of document that was supposed to prove that the land was his.[41] Army officers in particular, such as the generals Romeo and Benedicto Lucas García - the former was president between 1978 and 1982 and the latter his army chief of staff - have been successful in gaining rights over large tracts of land in the Franja region. Attracted by the possibilities of extensive cattle raising and the discovery of oil, the generals worked out ambitious plans to develop this region, but the land turned out to be of poor quality and the oil exploitation was not very promising. In the meantime large landownership had established itself with the resulting marginalization of the Q'eqchi' communities.

Land conflicts are a major source of violence in the Q'eqchi' region, even to the present day. In land conflicts the finqueros are usually supported by army or police forces. For example, on the sixth of January

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[40]. AVANCSO n.d.(b): 42, 43.

[41]. AVANCSO n.d.(b): 45; Adams 1965: 10, 15. It is impossible to give an indication of numbers of people involved in this kind of experiences, but in all the settlement areas the priests and religious women were able to mention a great number of such stories.

1976 the *Guardia de la Hacienda*[42] killed four peasants and injured another from the village of Semococh because of a land conflict.[43] In May 1978 the army opened fire on a crowd of Q'eqchi' leaders in the town of Panzós after they had been invited by the mayor to discuss land problems. 104 Q'eqchi'es ended up dead on the street. One month later several Q'eqchi' communities invited the army officers to come to their villages for a reconciliation.[44]

Land conflicts are not the only source of massive violence in the region. The appearance of the guerrilla organization *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* has seriously added to the problem causing the army to step up its level of repression and violence. At the national level the counter-insurgency policy of the army was a response to the growing popular protest in the 1970s, the increasing military power of the guerrilla movements and the fear that a revolutionary take-over such as the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua might take place in Guatemala as well. However, in order to explain the massive and brutal violence unleashed by the army between 1978 and 1984[45], other factors have to be taken into account such as the crucial role of racism in Guatemalan society and the inability of the state to control the Indian population other than by violent means.[46]

Leftist writers of the 1980s generally subscribed to the interpretation that guerrilla activity was the continuation of "popular struggle", such as the struggle for land waged by the Q'eqchi'es. This view assumes that such popular struggle of peasants for land and labourers for higher wages during the 1970s developed into armed struggle by guerrilla groups at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s.[47] Nevertheless, in the case of the Q'eqchi' region there is very little evidence to support this interpretation or to suppose that the Q'eqchi'es saw armed struggle as having something to do with the land conflicts in which they were engaged. The guerrilla arrived relatively late in the region - at the end of the 1970s - and the guerrilla had no significant support base among peasant organizations as in other parts of the country. In fact such organizations hardly existed in the Q'eqchi' region.

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[42]. Para-military rural police.

[43]. AVANCSO 1992: 168.

[44]. Information provided by the priest who was in charge of the parish of Panzós at that time. The intentions of this gesture and what actually happened at these reconciliation meetings are hard to reconstruct, but in line with the discussion of the ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with intervening actors and agencies one may expect that these communities wanted to avoid further conflict and escalation.

[45]. Several sources estimate the number of deaths at the beginning of the 1980s at 50,000 to 70,000, the number of destroyed communities at 440, the number of people who had to leave their places of origin at about one million and the number of refugees who fled to Mexico at more than 100,000. These sources include: Washington Office on Latin America 1985; Manz 1986; Amnesty International 1981.

[46]. Smith 1990b: 17.

[47]. See for example Black 1984 and Jonas 1991.

Before embarking on armed conflict with the army, the guerrilla hardly bothered to explain the objectives of their struggle to the population.[48]

Advocates of this leftist interpretation point to the fact that many thousands of Q'eqchi'es who fled from the army, sought refuge in the nearby mountains where they knew the guerrilla had its military strongholds. However, several interviews I conducted in 1987 with some of these people after they had left the mountains, as well as sources within the Catholic church, indicated that they had gone to the mountains out of despair to look for safety in areas that are difficult to penetrate. In fact the guerrilla had their strongholds there for that very same reason. Ideological or any other identification with the guerrilla struggle does not seem to have played a significant role. In the words of the bishop of Verapaz, Mgr. Gerardo Flores Reyes:

> '...it is well known that, as the *indígenas* of many villages fled to the mountains of Alta Verapaz, this was not so much due to an ideological motive... but to the terror which these communities feared at that time.'[49]

There are no indications whatsoever that the Q'eqchi' population would have supported the guerrilla struggle, a conclusion which almost all of the Catholic clergy who worked in the region at the time, confirmed to me. Almost all the Q'eqchi'es in the war zones were trapped between two armies during those years.[50]

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the army is to blame for an overwhelming majority of cases of violence against the Q'eqchi' population. Bloodshed on a massive scale occurred in the areas of Chisec and Cobán as well as in more isolated parts of Playa Grande, Sayaxché, San Luís Petén, El Estor and Panzós between 1981 and 1983. The army felt it to be necessary to wipe out the guerrilla by destroying the social structure which might provide the guerrilla with a support base. It destroyed entire communities, killed part of the population and drove many to flee to the mountains, to neighbouring areas or to Mexico. Based on detailed interviews with spokesmen and spokeswomen who worked in these areas during those years as well as on written sources[51], I estimate at one hundred the total

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[48]. This is the general picture that emerges from the statements of several respondents within and outside of the Catholic church. AVANCSO confirms this conclusion: AVANCSO 1992: 173.

[49]. AVANCSO 1992: 176.

[50]. Wilson writes about the rebels operating within an infrastructure of solid support, about the mass incorporation of the Q'eqchi'es into guerrilla ranks, and about widespread insurrection (Wilson 1995: 211, 222, 230, 258) without providing any data that might support his view. For the same reason his claims about an emerging class-based identity is not convincing either.

[51]. These sources include AVANCSO 1990; AVANCSO 1992; CEIDEC 1990.

number of Q'eqchi' communities which suffered from massive violence or had to flee to other areas. This number does not include communities in neighbouring Poqomchi' areas of San Cristóbal Verapaz or Santa Cruz Verapaz which suffered very severely as well. Selective killings took place all over the Q'eqchi' region.

Those who at least survived the immediate massacre in their community either fled from or were captured by the army. The thousands who sought refuge in the mountains had to try to survive in extremely difficult circumstances without any support from outside while being hunted by the army.[52] Several hundred had to surrender to the army after several years of unbearable hardship, but close to 500 of them came down from the mountains between 1986 and 1988 under the protection of the Bishop who received them along with other Catholic church officials. These officials gave them protection, shelter and food, organized identity papers and set up several integrated development projects for them on land provided by the church.

Those whom the army had captured either immediately or after hiding in the mountains, were first held in prison camps where they received "ideological instruction" every day. Army officers tried to explain the dangers of communism, attempted to convince them that the army's version of what had happened to them was the correct one, and told them of the need to respect national symbols such as the flag and the national anthem. These camps existed for several years. Some of those who had been captured were put to work rebuilding local villages, the so-called "model villages". The houses in these villages were arranged in blocks and army posts controlled every movement of the inhabitants. The town of Chisec and ten nearby villages are cases in point. Efforts to transform these model villages into a so-called "development pole", including various kinds of development projects, have failed.

In addition, the adult male population throughout the country was forced to organize themselves "voluntarily" into the so-called "civil self-defence patrols". Every man was required to spend one in every seven to ten days on sentry duty to protect the town or village against guerrilla attacks and, perhaps more importantly, to inform the commander of the nearest army base every two weeks or every month about what happened in the community. In the Q'eqchi' areas struck by violence, these patrols were used by the army to pursue fellow Q'eqchi'es hiding in the mountains.

The period called "*violencia*" has been over since the middle of the 1980s and most of those who had to flee or had been captured by the army have settled down; however the problems are far from over. Many communities were torn apart between those who stayed and those who fled, and the former have sometimes occupied the land of the latter. Many new

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[52]. AVANCSO, *Política institucional hacia el desplazado interno en Guatemala.* Cuaderno de Investigación no. 6, Guatemala, 1990, p. 174.

communities were created including some who had fled and some who were captured.

In addition, these divisions were reinforced by ecclesiastical contradictions. In the war zones the priests were suspected of supporting the guerrilla and had to flee. In these areas pastoral work came to a halt for several years while evangelical churches were invited by the army to come and convert the Q'eqchi'es. There are many cases of evangelical leaders accusing their "religious competitors" of preaching communism with the army reacting violently as a result. Lay leaders of the Catholic church in particular were army targets. Moreover there were severe contradictions within the Catholic church as well. The Salesian priests of San Pedro Carchá accused their colleagues of the parishes of San Martín (Cobán) and Chisec of supporting subversion while the latter accused the former of justifying army violence.

As a result of all these incidents there is a general atmosphere of distrust and fear among the Q'eqchi'es in the areas that have suffered from massive violence, and community life and structures in these areas are rather weak. The consequences of these experiences for the religious life of the Q'eqchi'es have been outlined by the anthropologist Richard Wilson.[53]

Catholic restoration

The ecclesiastical contradictions mentioned above already pointed to the renewed presence of the Catholic church after its virtual absence from large parts of the country after the Liberal Reform. Gradually and with occasional serious setbacks, the church succeeded in normalizing its relations with the state, opening the way for its restoration from the 1930s onwards.

The church was able to achieve this, first of all, by welcoming foreign priests and religious orders. It was mainly because of this that the number of priests in the whole country increased from 114 in 1945 to 608 in 1970.[54] This increase allowed the church to create new administrative divisions. The Diocese of Verapaz, the Apostolic Vicariate of El Petén and the Apostolic Administration of Izabal were erected in 1935, 1951 and 1968 respectively.[55] However even when comparing with the rest of the country, the restoration of the church in the Q'eqchi' region took place rather late, from the middle of the 1960s onwards. The Dominicans have returned but they now have to cooperate with other religious orders.

One of the main tasks of these new priests and religious women was the instruction and training of lay leaders who were supposed to lead and

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[53]. Wilson 1991: 33-61; Wilson 1995: 206-260.

[54]. For an elaboration on the restoration of the Catholic church see Samandú, Siebers, Sierra 1990: 27-36, 43-45.

[55]. Samandú, Siebers, Sierra 1990: 27, 28, 34. The bishopric of Verapaz covers the departments of both Alta and Baja Verapaz.

organize church activities within their local communities. For this purpose the San Benito training centre was set up in Cobán in 1968 for catechists from all over the bishopric of Verapaz. This instruction went beyond a focus on religious issues such as the meaning of the sacraments, basic knowledge about the Bible and on how to lead a celebration of the Word (a Mass-like service without the presence of a priest). The catechists also received training in agricultural methods, how to form a cooperative, the value of community life and the "dignity of every person". This last principle established that everyone, including Q'eqchi'es, ladinos and finqueros, are equal in the eyes of God. According to several priests this aspect of the dignity of every person aroused much enthusiasm among the Q'eqchi' catechists.

The relatively late recovery of the church in the Q'eqchi' region meant that this recovery took place when the movement of church renewal, linked to the Second Vatican Council and the Bishops' conference of Medellín, was well on the way. As a result the church in the Q'eqchi' region did not regard the Q'eqchi'es as simply objects of conversion. Consequently, it was able to avoid the fierce conflicts with the cofradías and other indigenous religious leaders which the Catholic church provoked in other parts of the country.[56] The lay organization *Acción Católica* which played a crucial role in these conflicts, had no stronghold in the Q'eqchi' region.

Nevertheless, the fact that young men especially were recruited as catechists constituted a challenge to the authority of elderly couples in the local communities, the introduction of new religious practices and meanings did create tensions within the communities and the cofradías lost part of their influence. In the 1970s the church had not yet developed a positive attitude towards Q'eqchi' religious practices and local leaders.[57]

Differences within the church mainly centred on social and political matters. On the one hand groups of priests, inspired by liberation theology, included a reflection on social reality in their pastoral methods and tried to make the link between a religiously based judgement of social reality and efforts to change this reality. They focused on such issues as the demand for higher wages on the fincas and the villagers' need for more land.[58] On the other hand there were priests who considered these pastoral methods as something close to communism and who tried to prevent the Q'eqchi'es

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[56]. An excellent account of these conflicts is presented by Falla 1978.

[57]. Cabarrús 1979: 126-128.

[58]. Wilson's claim that the clergy actively endorsed their congregation's decision to support the insurgents (Wilson 1995: 215) is not only refuted by explicit statements the clergy concerned made to me in confidence and private, it is also quite irresponsible to write such a thing while some of the priests and religious women concerned still work in the region. His assertion that there were Marxist missionaries working with the Q'eqchi'es ten years ago (Wilson 1995: 263-264) shows that he is not very familiar with what religious discourses and pastoral methods of the Catholic church are all about (see Chapter Three).

from engaging in any activity that might cause problems with the authorities.

While the Catholic church restored its presence in the region, it lost its ecclesiastical monopoly. The first evangelical church, the Nazarene Church, established itself in the region as early as the beginning of this century. It was followed in the 1960s by other churches but membership remained rather limited. From the 1970s onwards the prospects for these churches changed dramatically as they began to convert large numbers of Q'eqchi'es and relations with the Catholic church seriously deteriorated.

2.3 Basic aspects of the life-worlds of the present day Q'eqchi'es

The contemporary Q'eqchi'es have inherited from their history a number of elements which impel them to construct meaning and to work out strategies in response to these experiences. Some of these elements have already been mentioned, such as the latifundio-minifundio system, the rise of cardamom production, the migration movements, the land conflicts, the experiences of violence and the changing influence of various churches. In order to give a more balanced picture of the life-worlds of the Q'eqchi'es, these elements have to be complemented by other components. These include the natural environment, population density, the household, leadership within their communities, identity constructions, their ways of dealing with intervening actors and agencies, their involvement in education projects and their approach to politics.[59] Elements which refer to religion and the economy will be mentioned only very briefly in this chapter as they are covered in greater detail in subsequent ones.

People and natural environment

The 600,000 Q'eqchi'es live in a region that covers some 20,000 square kilometres, or about 18 per cent of the national territory.[60] About half of them live in the valleys and on the mountain slopes in the Q'eqchi' heartland (see Map 3), where a moderate temperature prevails, and altitudes range from 600 metres above sea level to 3,015 metres for the highest mountain, the *Qawa' Raxon*. The other half of the Q'eqchi' population lives in the tropical lowlands of the settlement areas where temperatures can run as high as 40 degrees Celsius. The soil in these areas provides the Q'eqchi'es

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[59]. This section is mainly based on information gathered in interviews with those who have a regional overview and with respondents from the four communities I studied in detail and which will be presented in the next section.

[60]. Estimations based on several sources including the National Institute of Statistics INE in the capital, the department of statistics of the departmental government in Cobán, the various municipalities and the priests and religious women in the various parishes. These data refer to 1992.

with abundant harvests in the first few years of cultivation, but its humus layer is thin and after a few years it rapidly looses its fertility. The highlands have a karst soil and many subterranean rivers. The whole region receives abundant rainfall in the rainy season which lasts from June till January.

Q'eqchi'es live together in local communities which I estimate to number about 1,600.[61] By far the majority of them are independent villages and fincas, but they also include a limited number of cooperatives and local communities in urban neighbourhoods. The largest of the Q'eqchi' communities, numbering up to several thousand inhabitants, can be found in the heartland while in the remote settlement areas communities usually have only a few dozens families. Population density ranges from seven inhabitants per square kilometre in the area of Sayaxché to 406 in the area of San Juan Chamelco.

Q'eqchi'es prefer to form ethnically homogeneous rural communities. They usually meet non-Q'eqchi'es outside of their own rural community, they either travel through other rural communities or visit towns in which the non-Q'eqchi' population is relatively large. However in practice, the army pursues a policy of bringing people together in multi-ethnic communities, probably in an effort to destroy existing identities and to enhance identification with a Guatemalan nation. As a result there are Q'eqchi'es living in mixed communities in the war zones. The non-Q'eqchi' population of ladinos, Poqomchi'es, Rab'inal Achi'es, K'iche'es, Maya-Mopanes, and Garífunas numbers about 100,000 persons.[62] Consequently, six out of seven inhabitants of the region are Q'eqchi'es and the total population consists of some 700,000 souls.

Households

The Q'eqchi'es consider the household to be the basic unit of social organization in their communities. A household may consist of a man and a woman with some children and other family members. In the villages where I worked, the average number of persons per household varied from 5.6 to 6.5. The couple may be married but I visited quite a number of couples who lived together without being married as well as several female headed households which, in one community, make up as much as ten percent of all households. In the eyes of the Q'eqchi'es the decisive criteria to be able to talk about a household is whether the persons concerned are living in their own house. Couples who live in the house of one of the parents are not considered to be adults nor to make up a household.

A household is often formed when a boy and a girl reach the age of fifteen to eighteen and, although I noted some exceptions, the general pattern is patrilocal. The girl first joins the household of the boy and then

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61. *Idem.*
62. *Idem.*

they build their house close to that of his parents. Gradually, over several years, they receive their land from the boy's parents. This gradual pattern of becoming economically independent underlines the continuing importance of family and kinship lines. In general, those from the same kinship or family line who live in the same local community help each other by contributing labour, crops or money in case of need.[63]

Where possible their houses are scattered, which reflects the importance they attach to family life. They want to create a separate space including the land they cultivate or leave fallow, the animals they raise and the natural surroundings as part of the economic and symbolic household unit. Moreover, the dispersion of the houses keeps the animals from eating their neighbour's crops and makes it easy to deal with waste.

However, as in the old colonial days it is still government policy to encourage the villagers to build their houses in village centres in order to control them more easily. In measuring the land of a community INTA officials make a distinction between land to be used for agricultural purposes on the one hand and land on which to build their houses - the so-called *lotes* - on the other. INTA locates these lotes closely together in village centres. In 1986 in the community of Chaabilchoch, not far from the war zone, the army and INTA forced the villagers to build their houses in such a centre.

The Q'eqchi'es build their houses in a rectangular shape. Usually they make their walls with sticks but some use planks or even bricks. They thatch the roof but some use corrugated iron sheets as well. Concrete floors are rare. In the centre of the house there is a wall separating the kitchen from the living room. Some households have two separate houses to be used as a kitchen and a living room respectively. Variations in building materials not only depend on the level of income of the household, but also on the available materials in the natural environment.

In most of the houses there is very little furniture. People sit on a plank resting on some rocks and sleep in their hammocks; food is kept in the attic or in a closet and clothes hang on a rope. Machetes and pots stand against the wall. Only a few households have chairs and a table, a cupboard and wooden beds. Favourite luxury articles include a saddle for those who have a horse or mule, musical instruments such as a marimba or violin, a radio, and pictures or even statues of one or several saints on their altar. All households, except the evangelical ones, have an altar. The images are surrounded by flowers, candles and sometimes corncobs and beans. Almost always, small animals walk in and out of the house.

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[63]. The objective of this description is not to create a harmonious picture of the households and kinship relations among the Q'eqchi'es. I have come across several conflicts and problems within households and there may be many more, but it turned out to be impossible and imprudent to ask about these kinds of problems.

Local leadership

Every community has one or several church buildings, a community hall and sometimes a school. These buildings are the visible symbols of common activity and social life at the community level. To make sure that these activities are performed, there are various leaders and committees who are members of the community. In the last three decades the old leadership structure of *pasawink* (couples of elderly men and women) and cofradías, or *chinames* as they are called in the rural communities, has lost its monopoly of leadership at the local level. It has been complemented by a group of catechists and, in some communities, by evangelical leaders, an auxiliary mayor, one or several military commissioners, a civil patrol committee, a Local Development Committee or Improvement Committee as well as other committees responsible for specific tasks such as the school committee, the drinking water committee or the cholera emergency committee, and by several individual leaders such as the local health promoter and the adult education orientator.

Most of these leaders and committees will be discussed in the chapters on religion and the economy. At this stage I will specifically discuss the *alcalde auxiliar* (auxiliary mayor), the *comisionado militar* (military commissioner) and the civil patrol. The auxiliary mayor is the personal representative of the mayor in the village. He goes to the municipality every week or fortnight to report to the mayor on the affairs of the community and passes on the mayor's messages to the villagers. He is supposed to look after the community and to solve a broad range of problems and conflicts that might arise. He is either chosen by the pasawink or elected by the whole community and serves for one or two years.

In a sense the auxiliary mayor is an instrument in the hands of the state to control the local community. Another such instrument is the military commissioner. In each community there are one or several of these commissioners whose task is to help the auxiliary mayor, to inform the nearest army commander - sometimes a day's travel - every fortnight about what is going on in the community, and to send young men to the army base to do their military service. Contrary to the auxiliary mayor he is not elected by the community but chosen by the army commander and his appointment is not temporary but permanent. Apparently, the army does not want to deal with different men every few years.

Keeping the commander informed is no exclusive task of the commissioners since the chairman of the civil patrol committee regularly has to do the same. He is responsible for the performance of the civil patrol services whose practices vary a great deal. In some communities the army continues to force the men to spend one day out of every week or ten days walking around with a rifle strapped to their backs. In other communities the men told me that they were active but at that moment were 'only taking a rest'. In general, communities close to areas where there is military activity

are forced to 'perform their duties' whereas on fincas the administrator uses them to guard the finca. Usually they are just wasting their time.

Concerning these auxiliary mayors, military commissioners and leaders of the civil patrols, the same thing can be said as was pointed out about the historical role of the cofradías: they are "brokers". On the one hand they embody instruments used by the state to control the communities. In some of the communities which I studied in detail the military commissioner was looked at with suspicion when he took his task seriously and actually sent youngsters to do their military service. On the other hand, these leaders serve the community by representing it before the state and other authorities, keeping the interests of their own communities in mind. In every community the loyalty of these leaders was clearly with their local community. Other community members talked about them in terms of whether they are nice and respectable persons, the same criteria they apply to everyone. Instances known in other parts of the country, of civil patrols abusing their military support, taking control of the local community and marginalizing all other local leaders, are unknown in the Q'eqchi' area except where there was massive violence.[64] In general, the communities have been successful in adapting to the forced introduction of these duties and the patrols do not pose a threat to existing leadership structures.

Each committee and leader has its own responsibilities though they are in no way exclusive. In principle, everyone talks about everything and it is not uncommon, for example, for the local development committee to discuss religious matters or the catechists to deal with the prevention of cholera. Moreover, in some communities the most common procedure is for the relevant committee or leaders to discuss issues that concern the community and then present the results of their discussions to the meeting of all adult men. This meeting is where every adult man may speak out on any matter. Discussions often take hours before reaching a consensus and a decision. In a few of the communities I visited, some women participated in these discussions as well.

In other communities the practice of a "general assembly" has been lost. There the leaders and committees take and implement decisions without explicitly seeking a consensus. In these communities leaders take decisions on their own, but the absence of a "general assembly" may make it much more difficult for them to convince the villagers to execute their decisions. In any case, local leaders and committees can do very little without the agreement of the other members of the community.

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[64]. Wilson's assertions that the civil patrols would have taken over local power in a despotic way (Wilson 1995: 239-240, 247) and his emphasis on the institutional and ideological influence of the army on the local communities (Wilson 1995: 251-252) only make sense in relation to the communities in the areas that have suffered from massive violence, *i.e.* one hundred of the total of 1,600 local communities.

In the communities I studied, the leaders and committees are able to maintain and organize a considerable level of activities at the community level. Several of these activities will be discussed in the next chapters. Local leaders are not able to avoid or solve every internal conflict in the community. I have come across several conflicts between families or hamlets in the same village when villagers themselves found it very difficult to point out what was at the heart of the conflict.

Identity constructions[65]

Not surprisingly, the two levels of social organization of the community, the household or family and the community as such, appear also as the two main social and spatial categories with which the Q'eqchi'es predominantly identify and to which they feel allegiance. Both categories not only encompass specific members but also a certain space. In the case of the household or family, this space includes the house(s), the animals and crops, and the lands to which the household or family has access. The community encompasses the buildings and their immediate surroundings as well as the land belonging to it.

The identification of the Q'eqchi'es with their community shows some variations. This identification is interrelated with the level of economic, social and religious activities that are performed at the community level. Moreover in the communities that are divided by different church affiliations, the church community partly substitutes for the local community as a source of identification. Especially in the case of minority church groups engaged in tense relations with the rest of the village and who do not participate in economic or social activities organized at the village level, allegiance tends to shift towards the church community.

At a second and very subordinated level the Q'eqchi'es identify with the central town of the municipality, their church organization outside of their community and with the Q'eqchi'es as an ethnic group. In the case of the church the Q'eqchi'es feel loyalty to the priest of their parish, to the minister and his central church, to the bishop, the pope, the missionaries etc. This is mainly a social category but the Q'eqchi'es talk with respect about the places where the parish church and the cathedral or the central church are situated.

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[65]. This text on identity constructions is mainly based on the answers which my respondents gave to relevant questions in the interviews in the four local communities I studied in detail. For the numbers of households interviewed in these four communities see section 2.4. Here I focus on the geographical and social units the Q'eqchi'es identify with and on how they conceive of those who do not belong to these units. In subsequent chapters some aspects of the symbolic content of their constructions of identity will be presented. Some levels of identity construction that play a role in the life of the Q'eqchi'es, such as gender and age, have not been focused on in the fieldwork and subsequently will not appear in this text.

The category Q'eqchi' has both a social and a spatial meaning to them as well. To the Q'eqchi'es, language constitutes the most important criterion to distinguish between Q'eqchi'es and non-Q'eqchi'es. The ability and willingness to speak Q'eqchi' is the most important feature which characterizes Q'eqchi's, and the possibility of speaking Q'eqchi' with someone plays a crucial role in creating an atmosphere of trust. In the eyes of the Q'eqchi'es another difference between Q'eqchi'es and non-Q'eqchi'es is the fact that they perform *costumbres* (Q'eqchi' religious customs) while the latter do not. These costumbres comprise, among others, the yearly pilgrimages to several of the thirteen central mountains that can be found in the Q'eqchi' heartland. They symbolize allegiance to the Q'eqchi' region as a whole (see Chapter Four). Finally, the typical dress of Q'eqchi' women plays a role in Q'eqchi' identity. Men do not wear any specific items of clothing, but women are almost always dressed in their dark skirt and white blouse called *huipil* and they are proud of their long black hair.

The importance of language in distinguishing between Q'eqchi'es and non-Q'eqchi'es is reflected in the name which the Q'eqchi'es apply to all non-Q'eqchi'es: *aj Kastii, i.e.* those who speak *castellano* or Spanish. The fact that the ladinos and whites are included in this category causes no surprise. They are the government officials, the army officers, the large landowners, the finca administrators, the cash crop merchants, the NGO development workers, the politicians and the professionals.

What does cause surprise is the fact that the Q'eqchi'es include Indians from other ethnic groups such as K'iche'es, Rab'inal Achi'es and Poqomchi'es in this same category of aj Kastii. The Q'eqchi'es can only communicate in Spanish with both ladinos and the members of these Indian groups and the fact that only a very small minority of Q'eqchi'es speak Spanish prevents most of them from establishing relations of confidence and trust not only with ladinos, but with other Indians as well. The fact that the Q'eqchi'es include both ladinos and non-Q'eqchi' Indians in the same social category seriously questions the assumptions of many groups within the so-called Indigenous Movement who use the term "Maya" as a central category referring to the members of all the indigenous ethnic groups in Guatemala. At least among the Q'eqchi'es there is hardly any basis for talking about "the Mayas" as a relevant social category; the term "Maya" has no meaning to them. Moreover recent literature[66] stresses the fact that among all the indigenous population of Guatemala primary identification takes place with the local community rather than with the particular ethnic group, let alone with a category called "Maya" meant to include all indigenous ethnic groups.

The Q'eqchi'es are very aware of the difference between them and the aj Kastii, but there is considerable variation among them, both between and

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[66]. See for example Smith 1990b: 18-19.

within the communities I studied, about the relative degree of trust and mistrust to be granted to the aj Kastii. Answers varied from 'They treat us right' to 'They may want to kill us'. Nevertheless most of my respondents believed that their relations with aj Kastii are improving mainly because they themselves feel more self-assured towards the aj Kastii. 'We are awakening', as one respondent said. This holds true especially among the younger generations. They point to two central sources of this rising self-confidence: access to education and to the Word of God. Only a limited number of Q'eqchi'es have access to education and the effects of education are disappointing (see below). However the fact that this number is gradually increasing as is the capacity of the Q'eqchi'es to speak Spanish, has an important symbolic impact on them. It makes them feel that their desire to improve their situation and thus reinforce their position vis-à-vis the aj Kastii is not hopeless.

To the Q'eqchi'es evangelization is another source of self-confidence. Both Catholics and evangelicals expressed themselves in similar terms: the awareness that in the eyes of God all are equal has considerably improved their self-esteem. One respondent said to me: 'We used to fear aj Kastii but now, with the attention given to religion, everything has changed. We are brothers'. Another one told me: 'Their [aj Kastii - hs] seed is different from ours, but in the eyes of God all are the same'.

However this account of their relations with aj Kastii need some qualifications. Among those who expressed their distrust of aj Kastii, some mention certain categories of aj Kastii in particular. In addition, those who said that in general they do not distrust aj Kastii, told me that they cannot trust certain individual aj Kastii. These include aj Kastii government officials ('gentlemen of authority who speak Spanish and get angry') as well as merchants ('they consider us to be nothing, they go to the other side') who are mainly mentioned. The fact that I have not had the opportunity to ask pertinent questions to Q'eqchi'es living on fincas or in areas struck by massive violence probably explains why finca administrators, finca owners and army officers are not frequently mentioned as aj Kastii whom the Q'eqchi'es especially distrust.

In short, these special categories of aj Kastii whom the Q'eqchi'es particularly fear constitute the extreme of negative identification. At the other extreme of positive identification is the household. Between these two extremes the fundamental distinction opposes the household, the family and the local community, or local church community on the one hand, and all the rest on the other. Among the latter, secondary distinctions are made. One of these relates to church affiliation. Another applies to differences between Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii, but this distinction is loosing part of its problematic character as Q'eqchi'es are becoming more self-assured, though some categories of aj Kastii continue to earn their distrust.

These scales of identification coincide with the fact that there are no Q'eqchi' institutions at all that organize Q'eqchi'es beyond the local level.

The only forms of supra-local organizations are non-Q'eqchi' institutions such as churches, NGOs and government agencies. There are hardly any trade unions or peasant organizations.

External strategies

> 'It is typical of them [the Q'eqchi'es - hs] that, if possible, they try to avoid saying something unpleasant to a stranger. That is why they usually give evasive and appeasing answers, even when they have not the slightest intention to carry out the desired thing.'[67]

This statement of Karl Sapper at the beginning of this century accurately describes the ways the Q'eqchi'es, even today, continue to deal with those who do not belong to their household and local community. When communicating with intervening actors and agencies the Q'eqchi'es try to establish harmony. They remain polite and are willing to receive anyone. Meanwhile they try to establish whether the actor or agency can be trusted, *e.g.* whether there is some sort of introduction from a trusted person and whether the intentions of the actor or agency accord with their stated views and strategies. When trust is not established or they do not want to carry out the proposal, they will not say so clearly so as to avoid offending the intervening actor or agency. They simply do not cooperate when things have to be done and ensure that the subject does not rise again.

The first key to understanding this way of dealing with intervening agencies and actors is that the local community wants to retain its relative autonomy. These actors and agencies - including the state - are not in a position to control the local community completely or permanently. In the past few decades intervening agencies such as the state have been stepping up their efforts to deal with local Q'eqchi' communities and to gain influence within and over them, but the examples of the auxiliary mayor, the military commissioner and the civil patrols have already made clear that the local communities are able to make use of the limited room for manoeuvre that is left to them and turn these state initiatives to their own advantage.[68]

These intervening actors and agencies are almost exclusively made up of aj Kastii, so the second key to understanding the external strategies of the Q'eqchi'es is their wish to improve their position vis-à-vis the aj Kastii by way of enlarging their access to economic and cultural resources and other

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[67]. Sapper 1936: 23.

[68]. This characteristic of the Q'eqchi' communities is in line with what Carol Smith concludes referring to Guatemalan Indian communities in general. She writes that the desire to retain their local political and economic autonomy is central to the strategies of these communities: Smith 1990a: 263.

things without entering into conflict or open competition with them. One of the reasons for this desire to avoid conflict is the fact that they are unable to defend themselves against the aj Kastii. Talking about aj Kastii several Q'eqchi'es told me that 'economically and intellectually they are very intelligent, so they can easily do us harm, especially the finca owners'. Another respondent said: 'The aj Kastii are much more prepared so we cannot defend ourselves against them when we have some problem. Many aj Kastii take advantage of us because we have not studied'. An important reason for the Q'eqchi'es to want to have access to education is their desire to improve communication with aj Kastii in order to turn this communication more to their advantage.

A revealing example of these two keys of their dealing with intervening agencies is the drinking water project in one of the villages that I have studied. Lack of clean drinking water is a serious problem in this community, especially in the dry season. With the lead being given by UNEPAR, the agency in charge of improving the water supply in the region, and by the mayor of the municipality to which the village belongs, the villagers formed a committee to build a water supply system a few years ago. They sank two wells but in the end UNEPAR failed to supply the necessary pipes. This failure caused serious dissatisfaction among the villagers and confirmed their suspicion towards aj Kastii.

At the time of my fieldwork the *técnico de salud*, the employee of the nearby health centre in charge of improving hygienic conditions in the municipality, had taken up the issue and tubes provided by UNICEF were supposed to be delivered. But the government inspector in charge of drinking water urged the villagers to leave their scattered houses and to build new ones in a new village centre because this way, much fewer pipes would be needed. This advice coincided with INTA's policy towards the village which was also meant to force the villagers to build their houses in a village centre. INTA surveyed the lotes and offered them for free.

The villagers were suspicious of this and certainly did not want to cooperate with these efforts because, like all Q'eqchi' households, they wanted to continue to live in their dispersed houses. Consequently they avoided the issue, they felt the drinking water project was over and they apparently told Q'eqchi'es from a nearby village that they did not want to concentrate their houses because there was only dirty water available in the village centre. The técnico came to hear of this and in an angry mood, he told me that the villagers were not even able to understand that the reason for concentrating their houses was precisely to get access to clean drinking water through the system he was promoting.

In short, differences of interest and lack of trust between the villagers and the intervening actors were apparent and caused the drinking water project to end in failure. Having made an assessment of their relative power the villagers tried to avoid conflicts and communication. But this created a great deal of misunderstanding with the técnico and the words he used

revealed a rather negative view of the Q'eqchi'es. These types of misunderstandings frequently occur at the interfaces between Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii which the latter easily interpret in racist terms. The next time the técnico visited the community, this time to vaccinate the children, he was again received politely by the villagers.

Interfaces and trust

In order to understand the interfaces between Q'eqchi'es and intervening agencies and actors, we have to take two important factors into account. First of all, the meaning of the actions taken by both sides is not so much determined by their functionality, but by the social group to which the actors belong. For example, an agricultural extension worker offering some kind of technology to a Q'eqchi' community is primarily viewed by them in terms of whether he or she can be trusted, of the group to which the worker belongs and the appropriate position which the Q'eqchi' should take in accordance with the scales of identification outlined above. It is the social background of the worker rather than the usefulness of the technology on offer which determines the meaning the Q'eqchi'es attribute to his or her visit.

Secondly, relations between Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii have hardly become institutionalized through functional communication and as a result, the personal factor continues to play a dominant role. An agency is only able to work with a Q'eqchi' community whenever the particular employee who is in charge has been successful in creating a personal relation of trust and confidence with the members of the community. This confidence cannot easily be transferred to another employee of the same organization. On the other hand, once a relation of trust has been established, the Q'eqchi'es are sure to be interested in what an intervening actor is offering. Then they decide on whether his or her "offer" is useful to them and whether they will accept it.

This emphasis on trust in persons rather than expertise or professional knowledge has been classified in the preceding chapter as pre-modern. It is certainly related to the fact that only few of them have had any access to formal education which might have taught them to respect expert knowledge of any kind. However, the lack of institutionalized and formal communication as well as the importance of personal trust are in no way limited to Q'eqchi' - aj Kastii communication, they are quite common among ladinos and in ladino society as such. I have not studied ladino society in Guatemala systematically, but my experiences with ladinos point to the recurring need to confirm the "honour", "friendship", "probity", and "trustworthiness" of the persons one is talking to. It is very difficult to have regular or even incidental contacts with ladinos on a functional basis and avoid being categorized either as "friend" or "enemy". There is little room for

a third category of functional communication. There is no distinction between person and function.

Moreover, the meaning of communication within ladino society is very much influenced by the places which both communicating actors occupy in the social hierarchy. One may accumulate prestige by communicating with someone occupying a higher position while the other is creating a clientele. This hierarchical way of communicating moved by the aspirations of the individual to accumulate prestige, honour and wealth, explains much about the functioning of ladino staffed agencies. Official functions, goals and procedures may be quite different from the things that move these agencies and actually make them work. This difference between official and actual goals makes some of the many complaints about the lack of motivation of, among others, ladino teachers and agricultural extension workers stationed in Q'eqchi' areas, understandable. Most of them do not consider these areas pleasant places to work or live in and - perhaps more important - working with Q'eqchi'es certainly does not improve their status in ladino society.

Cultivating good relations with superiors who have the authority to transfer them to offices carrying a higher status and a higher remuneration becomes more important than doing the work properly. In interviewing teachers and agricultural extension workers, I could not escape the impression that these were their principal motivations and considerations.

Education

In spite of the fact that many interfaces between Q'eqchi' communities and intervening actors and agencies end in failure, the Q'eqchi'es certainly do not reject all forms of cooperation with them. The willingness to engage in such interfaces varies considerably from one community and from one issue to another. As indicated above, the Q'eqchi'es consider access to education as strategic in their relations with aj Kastii and they put much emphasis on learning to read and write and to speak Spanish. One respondent put it in the following words:

> 'We have to defend ourselves outside of the village. We do not know the future. There are people coming from outside of the village who tell us to leave, so we have to defend ourselves. Finqueros came here twice. Because I can speak Spanish I went to the office of INTA in Las Casas and we found out that these finca owners do not have any papers.'

As to the practical results of education efforts, there are no statistics available that refer only to the Q'eqchi'es. There is information at hand concerning the *región norte* which covers the departments of Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz. More than half of the population of this region are

Q'eqchi'es, more in the rural areas, and over half of the total Q'eqchi' population live in this region. Consequently, data concerning the región norte give only a rough indication of the educational profile of the Q'eqchi'es.

The illiteracy rates (63.81 per cent for the whole of the región norte and 72.73 per cent in the rural areas) and the percentage of the population without access to education (65.28 per cent and 74.06 per cent respectively) paint a very bad picture of educational attainments.[69] This picture becomes even worse if we consider that these figures only relate to the population six years and older and that the Q'eqchi'es are known especially for their illiteracy and lack of access to education. In the villages where I worked, only a few men were able to read and write and then only in a very rudimentary way.

The poor results of educational efforts in the case of the Q'eqchi'es are due, first of all, to a lack of public schools.[70] Only a minority of the local Q'eqchi' communities have a primary school with a teacher. Moreover 12 per cent of the local communities have a primary school (215 schools) set up by the Catholic church, thus the efforts of the state seem more unsatisfactory.

Secondly, in most of these schools instruction is given in Spanish and study materials are written in Spanish while almost all the Q'eqchi' children only understand their own language at the time they enter school. Consequently, they understand very little of what the teacher and the materials have to say. A bilingual programme called *Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe* (PRONEBI), sponsored by USAID, was set up in the 1980s but its effects have also been limited. It is only used in a minority of schools, the number of teachers able to teach in Q'eqchi' is still limited and several communities have protested against lessons being given in Q'eqchi'. They have told the education supervisors that they want their children to be taught in Spanish. Apparently, no effort has been made to explain the didactic features of the PRONEBI programme to them.

Thirdly, there is a general complaint about the lack of motivation on the part of the teachers, especially those who teach in the rural communities. It is not uncommon for a teacher to arrive in the community on a Tuesday, to give lessons for two or three mornings and go home again. Fourthly, although parents in general are motivated to send their children to school, they generally take them out before they reach the final grade, either

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[69]. Instituto Nacional de Estadística 1990: 38, 40, 41, 43.

[70]. This analysis of education in the Q'eqchi' region is based on interviews with the coordinators of the various education programmes, with seven *supervisores de educación* (education supervisors), with the teachers who worked in the local communities I have studied and with the households in these communities. In addition, I had access to the numbers of schools and pupils who entered and graduated in 1992 in each programme.

because they are supposed to get married or because they have to work in order to help their parents.

However this attitude on the part of the parents is closely related to problems with the content of educational programmes. In rural communities, parents want their children to learn to speak, read and write Spanish as well as learning many of the kinds which their parents use in agriculture and in the household. In addition to wanting their children to learn Spanish parents in communities situated close to the central towns want their children to learn various manufacturing techniques which they could use to become shoemakers, tailors, masons, carpenters and so on. However, the results of the Spanish lessons are poor and the school curriculum reflects the life-world of ladinos in the cities. This holds true even in the case of PRONEBI material which is little more than a translation of the original Spanish curriculum in Q'eqchi'. In short, there is a wide gap between what the parents want their children to learn and what their children are taught at school.

Even where a child has reached the final grade, secondary education is rarely available. The number of secondary schools is limited and almost all of them are situated in one of the central towns. This makes it almost impossible for rural parents to send their child to secondary school except for a few Catholic boarding schools.

In addition to education for children, there are several initiatives focusing on adult education. In total there are some 500 local groups who come together once or several times a week to study.[71] Some 80 per cent of these groups are directly or indirectly related to the Catholic church. The parish of Senahú, the congregation of Salesians and the Vicariate of El Petén have special programmes of adult education organizing about 200 of these groups, whereas the church related *Instituto Guatemalteco de Educación Radiofónica* (IGER) has set up another 200 local groups. About one hundred local groups are organized by the mixed government-private sector agency called the *Comité Nacional de Alfabetización* (CONALFA) in cooperation with other institutions, without the involvement of the Catholic church though it subsidizes some of the groups set up by the Catholic church.

In 1992 CONALFA launched an ambitious programme which involved contracting institutions to take responsibility for teaching a certain number of persons how to read and write. CONALFA pays the institution Q. 100 for each person, provides the study materials and, if necessary, the training of educational promoters. The institution involved is supposed to pay the salary of the promoter of about Q. 200 a month. It is still too early to evaluate its effects.

The IGER programme has a slightly longer history. It started its Q'eqchi' language programme in the second half of the 1980s and in 1992, it

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[71]. It is impossible to say in how many communities such groups are active because in a number of communities there are several groups.

enroled 4,500 adults as students. IGER is an independent organization but in the Q'eqchi' region, it works mainly through the parish structure. IGER has divided the Q'eqchi' region into twenty centres each of which has a coordinator. This coordinator receives training in the IGER office in Cobán, selects orientators in the local communities and gives them instruction at the centre. The orientator belongs to the local community and leads the meetings of the adult group once or twice a week. He - there is hardly any woman working as such - is supposed to understand Spanish and to have passed at least several levels of primary education. The study materials are written in Q'eqchi' language and present the content of primary bilingual education. IGER exams are recognized by the state. In addition to text materials the local groups use a cassette recorder to provide the correct pronunciation of the words they study.

The IGER programme has serious limitations. First of all, the programme has problems reaching women because the task of communicating with aj Kastii is mainly a man's job, as I was told by their husbands who participated in a local IGER group. Secondly, the Q'eqchi' men say they want to study but in practice those who have passed the age of thirty consider themselves to be too old. Thirdly, it is difficult to find in each community an appropriate person with didactic qualities and sufficient knowledge of primary education and who is able to lead the local group. Finally, the IGER programme shows a similar gap between content offered and demanded as in the case of primary education. The materials hardly reflect the life-worlds of the Q'eqchi'es and the IGER results of teaching the Q'eqchi'es how to speak, read and write Spanish are limited. In many communities the local group loses fervour and disintegrates after a few years.

In short, the initiatives in the field of education are still inadequate and their effects are limited. The gap between the kind of education which is on offer and the demand on the part of the Q'eqchi'es is primarily responsible for this limited impact.

Politics

As the issue of education shows, the Q'eqchi'es are willing to engage in interfaces with intervening agencies when they think they may benefit from them. The fact that a considerable number of educational initiatives have been started or supported by the Catholic church has certainly enhanced their trust in them. These initiatives have not compromised their desire to maintain their local autonomy, which explains much of their reluctance to engage in politics. The Q'eqchi'es want to keep the government away from their life-world as far as possible. Everything related to the government and politics frightens them. They do not consider themselves to belong to any national political entity and do not feel that there might be something to gain from joining a political party or project of whatever colour.

This attitude is reflected in the very low participation in, for example, national elections. During the presidential elections of January 1991, I was able to confirm that very few Q'eqchi'es showed up at the ballot boxes in Cobán. Their enthusiasm was certainly not enhanced by the fact that in the whole country district of Cobán, ballot boxes were placed only in the town, and a trip from many parts of the country district to the town takes at least one day. The only level of political organization in which the Q'eqchi'es are interested is the municipal level.

This attitude of rejecting any political involvement[72] except for the local level can also be seen in the ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with the renewed armed struggle in parts of the Q'eqchi' region. After the guerrilla movement had been defeated temporarily in 1983 and 1984, the *guerrilleros* have reappeared at the beginning of 1991 in the Franja Transversal del Norte. Their actions are primarily destructive in character: they repeatedly blow up the oil pipeline between Rubelsanto and Lívingston, set finca installations on fire and among other things have destroyed the electricity plant of the town of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas in February 1991 leaving the town without electricity and water in the dry season since water pumps run on electricity. Rich ladinos or state agencies are certainly not their only targets. I have spoken to several Q'eqchi'es who were lucky enough to possess a dozen or more cows in the area of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, but the guerrilleros told them to leave the area within one day. They had to sell their cattle quickly at far below prevailing prices but at least were able to save their lives.

A second type of actions consists of road blockades and temporary occupations of villages. Usually the bus travellers and the villagers are gathered and made to listen to a political speech or take some leaflets being handed out. The language used in these speeches and these leaflets is usually Spanish, so their ideological effects must not be overestimated. Several Q'eqchi'es and priests who were in contact with guerrilleros confirmed my own experiences with them: they were unable to speak Q'eqchi'. As a result, the Q'eqchi'es probably classify them as aj Kastii.

Moreover, guerrilleros have to eat, a need met partly by stopping ladino merchants and government personnel on the road and forcing them to pay a "war-tax". In addition, I have spoken to several Q'eqchi'es who were visited by a band of guerrilleros in search of food. Of course, the respondents gave them what they wanted. When I cautiously asked these respondents whether they liked to give them food, they pointed out that guerrilleros carry guns.

As a result of the reappearance of the guerrilla movement the army is stepping up its repression. In these areas corpses again appear in the streets

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[72]. Wilson claims that the Q'eqchi'es have many political strategies, but he can only make this claim by confusing political power with just any kind of power (Wilson 1995: 299-300).

and on the roads, once more dozens of people have to flee, men are forced to reactivate their civil patrols and development projects such as those of IGER suffer serious setbacks because of the climate of fear.

2.4 Four local Q'eqchi' communities

The presentation of various aspects of the life-worlds of the Q'eqchi'es in the previous section has been based partly on data gathered in local communities. Eight such local communities have been included in the fieldwork, four of which have been studied in detail and play a central role in this book. In this section these four communities will be briefly presented and the reasons for selecting them will be made explicit. The names of the communities as well as those of the leaders or specific respondents have been changed because information on issues such as access to land and conflicts with state institutions are too delicate to be linked to the names of existing communities.

The village of Xalihá

Xalihá is a village situated in the rather isolated country district of Chahal (see Map 3). A few hours walk along a small path takes you to the main road. Once a day a bus goes along this road to cover the 165 kilometres to Cobán which usually takes a day. The village does not have a long history as most of the household settled here in the early 1970s. At present[73], the village has 46 Q'eqchi' households for an estimated 258 inhabitants. Of these households, 40 were visited to conduct interviews. The 46 houses are scattered and connected by small paths which run through the fields and bushes. The village has a church, a community building and a school with a teacher.

The land to which the village has access is relatively fertile but with considerable variation with some parts unsuitable for cultivation. Pigs and rice are the main products sold by the villagers but the integration of the village in the market economy is limited. The total income earned by the villagers from selling their products or engaging in wage labour and the amount of external inputs in production are relatively low. The economy is largely based on subsistence production.

Except for evangelical leaders - the community has no evangelicals - all the various categories of leaders and committees outlined in the previous section are present in the community. It has a "general assembly" which decides on all community affairs. The village has catechists, chinames and several elderly couples of pasawink, and relations among these religious

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[73]. Formulations such as "at present" or "now" in this book refer to the time when fieldwork was done, *i.e.* in 1991 and 1992.

leaders are relaxed. The various religious leaders cooperate with each other. This relaxation is partly due to the parish policy which tries to stimulate the chinames, pasawink and catechists to work closely together in organizing both official Catholic and customary practices. Some evangelicals once visited the community to spread the evangelical message but they were expelled from the village.

One of the elderly men is a very famous *ilonel*, or customary healer. Q'eqchi'es from the entire Chahal area come to him to be treated. He has an active group of young men whom he trains to become iloneles and some of them are already practising their skills.

The village of Samox

To look for Samox, one has to go to the southern edge of the Q'eqchi' area; the village "clings" to the very steep slopes of the Sierra de las Minas, close to mountain Raxón (see Map 2). The few relatively flat places that are suitable for building a house make up a small area which has become the village nucleus. There, the villagers have built a church made of brick and a school building (it has no teacher); there is also a shop. The villagers use their land in a very intensive way.

Samox belongs to the Telemán area and the country district of Panzós (see Map 3). The villagers have much more contact with the surrounding villages and nearby towns (Telemán, La Tinta and Panzós) than the villagers of Xalihá. Between 20 and 25 day labourers from Telemán and La Tinta come to the village for several weeks each year to work in the coffee and cardamom harvest. The villagers go to communities in the lower part of the valley to rent a piece of land to grow their maize; some even own a piece of land or a house there. They often visit the markets in the nearby towns. It is a three hours walk to these towns and from there, there are regular bus services on a relatively good road to Panzós and El Estor as well as to Tactic, Cobán and the capital.

The village has been established recently. Most of its households settled there between 1975 and 1982. At present it has 42 households and its population amounts to 272 permanent inhabitants. Thirty nine households have been visited to conduct interviews, all Catholics except for one evangelical household. All except nine households are made up of Q'eqchi'es. There are six Poqomchi' households, one mixed Q'eqchi'-Poqomchi' household and two ladinos married to a Q'eqchi' man and woman respectively. The presence of these households causes no problem in the community. Whatever their origins, Poqomchi'es and even ladinos are adopting Q'eqchi' language and rituals.

The hiring of day labourers and the production of cash crops such as cardamom and coffee indicate a considerable level of market integration. Of the villages I studied in detail, Samox has the highest level of money income

per household and, according to the villagers, cash crop production was even considerably higher at the beginning of the 1980s.

The village has no evangelical leaders. The one evangelical household attends services in a neighbouring village. Except evangelical leaders, all types of leaders are there and the village has a very lively "general assembly". Here some seven or eight women regularly join in and their men do not seem to be disturbed by the fact that they often have the floor. In some of the discussions I witnessed, these women had the most outspoken opinions and forced the assembly to make decisions. In general, women play a more public role in Samox than they do in Xalihá.

As in the case of Xalihá both Catholic (catechists) and customary (chinames, pasawink) leaders cooperate closely with each other. The parish has followed a positive policy towards customary leaders and practices similar to that of the parish of Chahal. There is no ilonel in the village but the villagers go and visit iloneles in neighbouring communities.

The village of Chaabilchoch

The village of Chaabilchoch can be found along the river Chajmaïc in the northern part of Alta Verapaz. It belongs to the area of Raxruhá and the country district of Chisec (see Map 3). The usual way to go to the village is to take a two hours trip by canoe. Twice a week, on market days in the little town of Chajmaïc, canoes and small boats go up and down the river between Chajmaïc and Chaabilchoch. From this town buses leave several times a day for Cobán (five hours) in one direction and for Raxruhá, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and Chahal in the other.

As indicated above, INTA and the army have forced the villagers to build their houses in a real centre. Here there is a school with two teachers, several shops and an evangelical and a Catholic church as well as several other buildings belonging to the Catholic church. The 78 houses accommodate Q'eqchi' households which together make up an estimated population of 498 persons. Of these households 39 have been visited to conduct interviews. Of these 39 households 28 consider themselves to be Catholic, 10 of them belong to an evangelical church and one does not belong to any church. In addition to this permanent population, some fifty day-labourers come to the village every year to work for several weeks in the cardamom harvest. Most of the present households settled in the village around 1970. Although it is quite close to the war zones it has not suffered from violence.

The villagers of Chaabilchoch earn a considerable income per household from their cardamom production and many of their economic activities are oriented towards the market. The relatively high income from cardamom during the 1970s has enabled several villagers to build two storey brick houses.

The majority of the households are Catholic but there are also thirteen evangelical households. One of these joined the *Iglesia Evangélica de Cristo* one year ago. They attend services in a neighbouring village. The other twelve households belong to the *Iglesia de Dios de la Nueva Jerusalén* which has its own church building in the village.

The Catholic community boasts an impressive church and other buildings because Chaabilchoch is one of the *centros* of the Raxruhá parish. The priest visits the community several times a year and the villagers from seven neighbouring communities come to Chaabilchoch to meet the priest. The Catholic community is strictly organized around a group of thirteen catechists who have an important voice in all matters that affect the Catholic community. There is no "general assembly" in Chaabilchoch because of the division into various church communities and the attitude of the catechists. The catechists simply present their decisions to the Catholics during the celebration of the Word without leaving room for discussion.

As a result, both the evangelicals and the customary leaders are marginalized. In important committees, such as the Improvement Committee which deals with land matters, the evangelicals have no members and pasawink no longer manage to organize customary practices at the community level (see Chapter Four). The parish of Raxruhá has a rather negative policy towards customary religion. The village has no ilonel but there are several quite famous ones in a neighbouring village.

The village of Rubelpec

The village of Rubelpec is situated in the centre of the Q'eqchi' heartland and belongs to the country district of San Pedro Carchá. It has many contacts with urban life in nearby Carchá and Cobán and there is even a considerable group of women who go there regularly to work.

The community has existed since time immemorial and its 125 houses are scattered all over its territory. It has an old Catholic church and a small evangelical one, a consumer cooperative, a school with two teachers and a large community hall. The 125 households make up an estimated 751 inhabitants. Of these households, 71 have been included in my interviews: 55 of these consider themselves Catholic, seven belong to an evangelical church, six do not participate in any church, one is seriously considering a change from the Catholic to an evangelical church, one is a mixed Catholic and evangelical household and in the remaining one, some participate in the Catholic church while others did not.

All of the households in the village except one are Q'eqchi'es. Almost half of the households have one or more men who are absent from the community for several weeks or even a large part of the year because they work in the cardamom harvest, rent a piece of land or work as a travelling merchants mainly in the Franja Transversal del Norte. Chaabilchoch receives

Q'eqchi' day labourers every year while Rubelpec is one of the villages these day labourers come from.

Wage labour and commerce are the most important sources of income of the villagers followed by the production of huipiles, the typical white blouses worn by Q'eqchi' women. The village of Rubelpec is one of the few Q'eqchi' communities in which textiles are made. These huipiles are produced by women who sell them at the markets in Carchá and Cobán. Agriculture plays a marginal role in generating income since each household has access to only very little land. This land is mainly used for the production of maize and beans to cover their own consumption needs but a considerable level of modern inputs such as chemical fertilizers is used in this subsistence production. Of the villages I studied, Rubelpec has the highest level of market integration.

Like Chaabilchoch a majority of the community are Catholics, there are evangelical minorities and there is a small group of pasawink who abstain from any church participation. The Salesian priests of the parish of San Pedro Carchá follow the same negative policy towards customary practices as the parish of Raxruhá while in Rubelpec customary practices at community level just linger on. The catechists play a dominant role in every community matter and the practice of discussing these matters in a "general assembly" no longer exists.

The community has a church building of the *Asamblea de Dios*. Five households in Rubelpec as well as several others from nearby communities participate in this church. Five other households belong to the large *Iglesia del Nazareno* church in a neighbouring village which has a total of about 125 member households. In addition, several households have a mixed evangelical-Catholic composition and one household belongs to the Baptist church in Carchá.

The dominant role of catechists in all kinds of community matters does not prevent other villagers from developing some specific task within the community supported by an intervening government agency or an NGO. Because of its proximity to the offices of these agencies and NGOs, the village is regularly visited by their employees. They usually select one or several active members of the community to coordinate a specific project.

Four villages in a regional context

The previous chapter gives an outline of the first phase of my research which has focused on mapping the whole Q'eqchi' region. On the basis of the data collected during this phase, I have deduced the most important variables that determine the main variations among the local Q'eqchi' communities. These variables include proximity to urban centres versus relative isolation, the level of market integration, the presence of evangelical churches, and the kind of pastoral policy which the Catholic church is applying in the community. On the basis of these variables the four villages

introduced here have been selected because they represent the main variations based on these variables.

First, these four communities have been selected among rural communities because these constitute by far the majority of local communities. There are only a few urban communities. Yet, isolation versus closeness to urban centres is one of the variables used to choose the four communities. This variable coincides with the level of access to external influences and the importance of the role which intervening agencies and actors play in the life-world of the villagers. At one extreme we find Rubelpec, with a great number of intervening agencies and actors dealing with the community and many contacts with urban life in the nearby towns. At the other extreme there is Xalihá, situated in the isolated area of Chahal and with few agencies reaching the community. As for external influences and interventions, Chaabilchoch and Samox occupy an intermediary position between Rubelpec and Xalihá.

The same spectrum involving Rubelpec and Xalihá at the two extremes and Samox and Chaabilchoch in between, emerges in relation to the second variable, the level of market integration. In this respect several aspects have been taken into consideration: the number of activities oriented towards earning money and their importance to the local and the household economy, the kind of market-oriented activities (agricultural versus non-agricultural) and the level of inputs purchased by the villagers for their production activities. Together all these aspects determine the total level of market integration, not just the money income per household. For example the community of Rubelpec has a lower money income per household than either Samox or Chaabilchoch, but much more of the economic activities of the villagers of Rubelpec are mediated by the market than those of the latter two villagers (see Chapter Seven).

Concerning the third and fourth variable, the presence of evangelical churches and the kind of pastoral policy applied by the Catholic church, quite a different panorama emerges. Xalihá and Samox have hardly any evangelical presence while Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec have significant minorities of evangelical communities. Moreover the parishes of Chahal and Telemán, to which Xalihá and Samox belong, practice a pastoral policy that has been shaped by Dominican priests who continue to stress the positive value of customary practices and leaders (see next chapter).

In contrast, Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec belong to parishes run by Salesian priests who promote only Catholic practices and reject customary rituals. They try to maximize the influence of catechists at the expense of chinames and pasawink. The policies of the two religious orders constitute two opposing poles within the Catholic church. No community with a large evangelical majority or exclusive evangelical population has been selected because these communities constitute only a small minority of all the local communities. Besides, it would have been much more difficult for me to become accepted and be able to work in such communities.

Not only do these criteria and variables appear among the most prominent criteria and variables that distinguish the Q'eqchi' communities, they are also the most relevant ones in relation to the themes of religion and economy which will be dealt with in the next chapters. Nevertheless, the selection of four communities has its limits in terms of representativity in relation to all the various communities in the Q'eqchi' region. To begin with, the practical possibility of being able to work in the selected communities in the end played an important role in this selection. As a result, coffee or cardamom plantations have not been studied in detail although they constitute an important part of local Q'eqchi' communities. In spite of introductions from the bishop and the university, the research was slowly but steadily made impossible by the plantation owners or administrators. Production cooperatives do not appear among the selected communities either because their number is relatively limited.

Secondly, communities in areas that have suffered from massive violence have not been selected because they present a very special problematic requiring a special approach that deviates too much from the objectives of this research. Moreover the anthropologist Richard Wilson has already paid some attention to these communities (see references).

However the absence of fieldwork in these two contexts has been partially compensated by considerable information on various aspects of the life of the Q'eqchi'es in these same contexts provided to me by spokesmen with a regional overview. Moreover many of the respondents in the villages which I did study in detail had fled plantations before settling in these villages and were willing to share their experiences of the fincas with me.

In short, despite some limitations, the four villages that have been studied in detail represent very typical Q'eqchi' communities. Together with the data collected at the regional level, the material stemming from these communities reaches a high level of representativity in relation to the whole Q'eqchi' population in the Q'eqchi' region.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELIGIOUS FIELD:

INTERVENING CHURCHES AND LOCAL SPECIALISTS

> 'Once we suffered from a terrible drought. We took the cross from the cemetery and went to the riverbank and to the mountain at the other side of the river. There we sacrificed candles and *copal pom* and asked for rain. The widows did this because they are single and very well prepared in spiritual matters. All participated and contributed to buy candles and copal pom, even the catechists did. The evangelicals not. The day after it started to rain. This happened one year ago.'

3.1 Introduction

Religion is part of the Q'eqchi'es everyday life. This quote from some Q'eqchi'es in the village of Chaabilchoch refers to just one of the many occasions on which the Q'eqchi'es address certain "persons", in this case the mountain and the rain, who in a profane culture would not be considered living beings. Which specific phenomena, such as the mountain and the rain, are imbued with life is a matter of disagreement among Q'eqchi'es. However, in dealing with crucial issues in their daily life almost all Q'eqchi'es perform rituals that refer to one or more "persons" in the world of gods and spirits.

The word "religion" in relation to the Q'eqchi'es may cause some confusion. They make a distinction between "religion" and "customs". They talk about "religion" in the context of church affiliation in the sense of changing from one church - "religion" - to another. They use the word "customs" related to those practices and meanings that have their origin in their own history. This distinction points to their two main sources of religious meanings and practices. On the one hand there are the religious practices and meanings offered by the various churches and promoted by Catholic and evangelical leaders.

On the other hand there are customs transmitted from elderly men and women to the younger generation. Some of these customs have a Catholic colonial origin, such as the feast of the patron saint. Other customs,

such as the rituals celebrated in honour of the mountain, have no Catholic origin at all. Probably the meanings attached to these customs and their forms have changed considerably over the years and the Q'eqchi'es themselves are not interested in whether they have a Catholic origin or not. Consequently, I include all customs in the same category, whatever their origin may be.

Moreover, in their meaning-making process the Q'eqchi'es make use of representations and practices stemming both from their customs and the churches they are dealing with. The fact that they themselves use views and rituals from both sources allows me to employ the term "religion" in the general sense of practices and representations referring to a world of gods and spirits, regardless of their origin.

A I studied their religion I found the Q'eqchi'es to be very creative in constructing a large variety of practices and representations. Many respondents emphasized that they had left behind some rituals and ideas, while they started to perform other practices and constructed new representations. Q'eqchi' religion is an ongoing process of reshaping religious practices and of constructing and adapting religious meanings.

In this reshaping, constructing and adapting the Q'eqchi'es demonstrate a certain level of autonomy, but on the other hand they are influenced by those who consider themselves to be authorized to instruct them on religious matters. The Q'eqchi'es receive "inputs" in their meaning-making process from religious specialists. In the previous chapter we have already come across several of these specialists. There are the cofradías, the chinames and the pasawink who encourage the community to practise customary rituals and to follow the ideas of their ancestors. Moreover, there are catechists and local evangelical leaders who proclaim the representations and organize the practices of the churches they belong to.

These specialists belong to the local Q'eqchi' communities. In addition there are agencies of an external origin who intervene in these communities in order to influence the religion of the Q'eqchi'es: the Catholic and evangelical churches. These churches exercise their influence partly through their local representatives: the catechists and local evangelical leaders. Consequently, these representatives have a position as "brokers" between the community and these churches.

In many communities the specialists have some degree of influence over the religious practices and meanings of other believers. In other words, they have religious power. These power relations between religious specialists and "ordinary" believers point to the possibility of using the concept of religious field to analyze Q'eqchi' religion. In the first chapter it was explained that the rise of a distinctive religious field in society, with particular religious institutions and specialists and structured power relations, is indicative of early modern religion. At this stage of the analysis I do not want to suggest that Q'eqchi' religion is definitely modern. The question of whether Q'eqchi' religion has adopted the institutional form of a

field can only be answered after the final discussion of the relations between Q'eqchi' religion and Q'eqchi' economy in Chapter Eight. In anticipation of that discussion I wish merely to maintain that I consider the concept of religious field to be useful and appropriate for studying Q'eqchi' religion because the two main conditions for using it have been met. First, there are structured positions of unequal power relations in religious matters and secondly there is a special category of representations and practices that refer to a world of gods and spirits. These representations and rituals are relatively autonomous of for example economic meanings and practices.

It is not easy to separate Q'eqchi' religion from Q'eqchi' economy or health care. Religious leaders often feel the need to discuss "worldly" matters, and civil leaders such as the auxiliary mayor are often involved in religious matters. Nevertheless, there is a division of labour between the catechists and the auxiliary mayor for example. The former are responsible for church activities and the latter for communication with the municipality. The Q'eqchi'es talk about ways of improving their economic performance mainly in profane terms. There is another special category of practices and representations that refer to a world of gods and spirits.

In line with a field-approach the discussion of Q'eqchi' religion in this chapter will start with an analysis of the religious specialists. To begin with, intervening churches and their leaders who are almost always non-Q'eqchi'es, will be presented. Next, the various local religious specialists will be discussed. After that, the relations among the various religious specialists will be analyzed. In the next chapter the main religious practices and the religious discourse of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es will be outlined. In Chapter Five the religious discourse of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es and the influences of religious specialists will be classified in pre-modern, early or contemporary modern terms, and the power of these specialists as well as the room for manoeuvre of the Q'eqchi'es will be evaluated.

This chapter on the religious specialists is based on information gathered during 1991 and 1992 by interviewing several ministers and bishops, all the priests and most of the religious women in every parish within the Q'eqchi' region. In addition, the local religious specialists of the four communities presented in the previous chapter were studied.

3.2 Intervening churches

In almost all the local communities in the region one or more church buildings catch the eye of every visitor. They are the visible symbols of the presence of churches in the life-world of the Q'eqchi'es: the Catholic church and several evangelical churches. The Q'eqchi'es have invested impressive amounts of time and money in building these churches and church meetings make up an important part of their social life.

This importance points to the fact that churches are the intervening agencies that have most successfully established a stronghold in the life-world of the Q'eqchi'es. In the previous chapter it was shown that the Q'eqchi'es to a certain extent identify themselves with the church as social category. Nevertheless, there are strong arguments for conceptualizing churches as intervening agencies. First, churches do not constitute the primary social units of social identification. These units are the household or family and the local community; identification with a church is subordinate to these.

Secondly, priests and religious women[1] display all the characteristics of external actors. They originate outside the life-world of the Q'eqchi'es. Except for three priests and a few religious women all are non-Q'eqchi'es. They do not live with members of the community but visit the community a few times a year. The experiences of one priest who is known for his positive attitude to Q'eqchi' culture are illustrative in this respect. Released from his pastoral duties he spent an entire year in a Q'eqchi' village, living and working on the land alongside the villagers. At the end of this year the villagers told him: 'We are pleased with the fact that at last we see we can really trust a priest', or 'after all these years we feel you appreciate our customs'.[2] It is doubtful whether other priests and religious women have reached this level of confidence in the Q'eqchi' communities. Although no exact data are available, the number of Q'eqchi' ministers is considerably higher, but they are rarely considered to belong to the local communities.

Thirdly, the Q'eqchi'es deal with external religious specialists in much the same way as they treat other intervening actors. They receive them, are very polite, listen to what they have to say and afterwards select those things and meanings they consider to be useful; they adapt them to their situation and often modify their meaning in accordance with their own religious discourse.

Finally, in the previous chapter an additional argument for conceptualizing churches as intervening agencies was presented. The establishment of churches as a real presence in the life-world of most of the Q'eqchi' communities has taken place only in the last few decades, in the case of the Catholic church this presence has since then been interrupted in several parishes because of army repression.

3.2.1 *The Catholic church*

In spite of many setbacks caused by state repression, the Catholic church is the largest in the region. This section will provide an outline of its presence in the region, its pastoral structures and policies and internal tensions within

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[1]. I use the term "religious women" instead of the term "nuns" because the former has a more positive connotation.

[2]. Comments of Padre Antonio on what the Q'eqchi'es said about him.

the church. This outline will enable me to draw some general conclusions about its capacity to influence the communities as well as the character of this influence.

Parishes

At present, the Catholic church has a region-wide network of 27 parishes and parish-like units.[3] Each of these parishes and units usually consists of a parish church, one or more priests, sometimes a convent with three or four religious women and a structure of several hundreds catechists working in an average of about 60 local communities per unit. However, not every parish has religious women and there is even one parish that has no priest.

Only four priests and a few religious women work with the non-Q'eqchi' and urban populations. They work mainly with rather small groups to prepare believers to receive sacraments, with so-called apostolic lay movements[4] and with neighbourhood based groups. These groups focus mainly on religious instruction.

The priority of all the other priests and religious women is to work with the Q'eqchi'es, particularly those who live in the rural communities. There are forty priests, some eighty religious women and eight lay missionaries engaged in pastoral work with the Q'eqchi' communities. This means there is one priest and two religious women available per forty Q'eqchi' communities and about 2000 Catholic Q'eqchi' households. Their limited number and uneven spread over the region indicate that these "pastoral agents"[5] cannot themselves attend all these communities and households intensively. As a result, they focus mainly on the organization of a structure of catechists and other lay functionaries in every parish. In every community there are several catechists who organize church activities and their structures constitute the backbone of the church.

Catechists receive their training in the parish; the parishes of the bishopric of Verapaz send a few of their experienced catechists to courses in the San Benito centre in Cobán. They transmit what they have learned to their fellow catechists in the parish, who pass this knowledge on to their communities. The standard tasks of catechists are the celebration of the Word on Sunday and preparation of the villagers to receive sacraments. The priest administers these sacraments during his visit to the community or centre. Some parishes are organized in centres, which means that the priest

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[3]. I count the number of units that in practice function as a parish, the number of official parishes is much lower. I use the word "parish" referring to all those units that function as such in practice.

[4]. These movements include the *cursillos de cristiandad*, the *legión de María* and the *encuentros matrimoniales* for example.

[5]. The term "pastoral agent" refers to priests, religious women and lay missionaries.

visits only a centre community such as Chaabilchoch. Believers from nearby communities come to this centre to meet him.

Usually these visits to communities or centres, the administration of sacraments, the saying of Masses and the instruction of catechists are full-time tasks of the priests. In most of the parishes they also organize youth groups, and the religious women work with Q'eqchi' women and girls. In some 150 to 200 communities there is a group of women that gathers every week or month.

Pastoral work in the parishes is supported by the Catholic radio station, Radio *Tezulutlán*. It is one of the few radio stations that transmit exclusively in the Q'eqchi' language and reaches the local communities directly. It is on the air several hours a day and has a mixture of entertainment and instructive programmes on religious issues and on issues such as the prevention illness. The programmes are very popular among Catholics and evangelicals alike in the various communities throughout the Q'eqchi' region. The radio is an effective pastoral instrument. At present, another Catholic radio station is being set up in Poptún.

The numbers of pastoral agents, the organization of catechists and other groups in the parishes, the radio, and the fact that in almost all communities basic church-promoted activities such as the celebration of the Word and the preparation for the sacraments are performed regularly are all indications of the fact that the Catholic church has been successful in setting up a structure that is capable of influencing the religious life within the local Q'eqchi' communities.

Orders and bishoprics

However, this church structure is quite complex and heterogeneous which seriously hampers its efforts to develop a common policy towards the Q'eqchi'es. This heterogeneity is typified by the wide range of countries the pastoral agents come from. Apart from the three Q'eqchi' priests only eleven of the other priests were born in Guatemala, the remaining other 33 priests who are engaged in pastoral work come from 13 different countries. Among the religious women there is a similar variety of origins, albeit with a larger proportion of Guatemalans and Q'eqchi'es.

The heterogeneity of the church is also manifested in the importance of the various monastic orders. The monopoly of religious orders in previous centuries has been broken, but still only six priests are diocesan; the other 38 belong to eight different congregations. In order of number of priests these monastic orders are the Society of Saint Francis de Sales (Salesians), Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Claretians), Order of Friars Preachers (Dominicans), Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Scheutists), Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Order of Saint Benedict, and the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of the Americas (Maryknoll). There are even 12

different female orders involved in pastoral work. The numerically largest of them are the Sisters of the Resurrection, the School Sisters of San Francisco, the Dominican Sisters of the Annunciation, and the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The orders, both male and female, constitute the main organization which links the parishes. Between parishes staffed by the same congregation there is much communication and cooperation, including the exchange of pastoral agents. Each order has its own vocation, and pastoral policies are discussed and formulated mainly within the congregations. In the words of the bishop of Verapaz:

> 'As a congregation each has its own project, its own religious profile. How to unite them in a common diocesan project? It is difficult to unite Salesians and Dominicans'.

Indeed, he has a difficult task including all his clergy in a diocesan process because of Guatemala's long-standing history of mendicant orders each going their own way. He is still very dependent on these orders to staff the parishes of his bishopric.

Mgr. Gerardo Flores Reyes of the diocese of Verapaz is not the only bishop who works with the Q'eqchi'es. Parts of the Bishopric of El Quiché, of the Apostolic Administration of Izabal and of the Apostolic Vicariate of El Petén also belong to the Q'eqchi' region. The Apostolic Administration and the Apostolic Vicariate are diocesan-like institutions. They are on their way to becoming fully-blown dioceses with all the usual diocesan institutions and stable parishes, but have not yet reached this mature status. Their status is still missionary. For example, the parishes of Lívingston, Río Dulce and El Estor, situated north and west of Lake Izabal, are predominantly Q'eqchi' and have stable parish structures. However, officially they form part of the Apostolic Administration of Izabal from which in practice they function almost independently. According to the Claretian clergy in these parishes the bishop, Mgr. Luís Estrada Paetau, and the Administration's institutions do not show much interest in their work. These parishes mainly go their own way.

In short, although the Catholic church may have reached an unprecedented level of institutional build-up, it encounters serious difficulties in its efforts to work out a common pastoral policy towards the Q'eqchi'es. These difficulties include the wide variety of origins of its pastoral agents, the fact that four bishoprics or diocesan-like institutions are involved in pastoral work with the Q'eqchi'es, the continuing missionary character of two of these institutions, and last but not least the dominant role the various religious orders play. Pastoral policies are discussed and formulated mainly at the level of these orders.

In spite of these difficulties there are attempts within the church to reach a common pastoral policy. The Bishopric of Verapaz has been subdivided into four zones one of which encompasses its Q'eqchi' parishes. Every two months the clergy and representatives of the catechists of these parishes have meetings to discuss specific matters of pastoral work. In addition, all the priests, religious women and lay representatives of the Bishopric gather for one week every year to talk about general pastoral issues.

The discourse the various pastoral agents preach and promote in their parishes throughout the Q'eqchi' region have at least some characteristics in common. First of all, the life of Christ, the central issues and stories of the Bible, the meanings of the sacraments, the importance of loyalty to the church and its history are presented and explained. Catechists are instructed in how to use the Bible[6], how to preach in public, the basic elements of the Mass, the celebration of the Word and the liturgy. All warn the Q'eqchi'es to be aware of the evangelical churches and to avoid being deceived by them.

Secondly, the pastoral agents repeatedly emphasize the need to obey the central moral demands they believe God has made on the Q'eqchi'es. The celebration of the Word and preparation for sacraments such as Baptism and Marriage are used as occasions to instruct the Q'eqchi'es in these moral demands. These demands are that one should worship God and pray to Him, and receive the sacraments. Couples should marry, stay loyal to each other, educate their children and, if possible, send their children to school. Each should lead a decent family life and perform the tasks he or she is supposed to perform according to the division of labour within the household. All should abstain from quarrelling, fighting and stealing, and serve the community and the church. In short, all should remember God and lead a harmonious family, community and church life.

Thirdly, almost all the priests and religious women are very interested in improving the social reality of the Q'eqchi'es. They stress the "dignity of man" and consider the existing social reality not to be in accordance with the conditions God wants the Q'eqchi'es to live under. The considerable efforts of the church in the fields of education, economy and health care result from this basic conviction. Its education projects - 215 primary schools, seven institutes of secondary education and about 400 adult education groups directly or indirectly set up by the church - were mentioned in the previous chapter. In Chapter Six the church's economic projects will be outlined. In addition, the Catholic church is heavily involved in health care projects: 14 health clinics and several health promotion projects with a total of 900 promoters working in about one-quarter of the Q'eqchi' communities.

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[6]. The New Testament has been translated into the Q'eqchi' language.

The pastoral policies of the various priests and religious women have these three elements in common. However, next to these elements the differences begin. Differences of opinion and pastoral policy frequently arise, and efforts to coordinate the activities and viewpoints of the various parishes easily end up in conflict. Basically there are two central pastoral policies, each with its own group of pastoral agents promoting and applying it. The first pastoral policy may be called "sacramentalist" and the other "liberating". The former emphasizes the importance of the sacraments and the exclusive role of the priests in administering them, which legitimates a paternalistic role for the clergy in religious and social activities. Those who apply the latter policy want the clergy to play a rather more serving role ceding room for the laity to participate. The concept of liberation has a central place in their discourse.[7]

Sacramentalist pastoral work

The main protagonists of sacramentalist pastoral work are the Salesians. They apply this policy in the five parishes they run (San Pedro Carchá, Campur, Playa Grande, Chisec and Raxruhá). This kind of pastoral policy is practised in the communities of Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec .

Linked to their exclusive right to administer sacraments, the Salesian priests claim to be the only ones who "possess" the pure doctrine and teachings of the Catholic faith. They do not accept the fact that their understanding of this faith is only their interpretation of God's message to man, based on studying the Bible and Catholic doctrine and influenced by their own cultural background which happens to be non-Q'eqchi'. They think they know the real faith; consequently the fundamental logic of their pastoral work is to transmit this faith to the Q'eqchi' laity. Pastoral work is a one-way street from the Salesians to the Q'eqchi'es. The latter are supposed to passively receive and actively apply what they are told.

The religion they promote emphasizes the performance of standard Catholic practices such as the Mass, the celebration of the Word, the preparation of believers who are to receive sacraments and the celebration of special occasions such as Christmas and Holy Week. Rather abstract notions of a "loving God" and "salvation" play a central role in their view. To achieve salvation one must listen to the Word of God, comply with the moral demands God makes on man and stay loyal to the church.

The Bible - or more accurately, their interpretation of it - is the only criterion to use in deciding whether a representation or practice is valid; as a result the Salesian understanding of religion has a universalist claim. The moral values of the Salesians are directed to the individual. In addition to the moral values outlined above the Salesians stress the requirement of

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[7]. For an elaboration of the various policies on pastoral work and their development within the Catholic church in Guatemala see L. Samandú, H. Siebers, O. Sierra 1990: 46-49.

abstaining from drinking, contributing to building large church buildings, working hard and improving the material well-being of the household. The Salesians consider loyalty to the church to be more important than loyalty to the village, this is symbolized in the fact that in their parishes children receive their First Communion not in their own community but in the central parish church. The main task of the community of believers is to promote the salvation of individual believers.

As a consequence of their paternalistic attitude, they consider their religion to be antagonistic to the main customary rituals and representations the Q'eqchi'es have been practising. Customary practices are associated with getting drunk, adultery and all kinds of other vices. The Salesians have organized their parishes in such a way that vital conditions for the reproduction of customary religion become disrupted. Knowledge about how to perform customary rituals and related meanings are usually transmitted from the pasawink to the youngsters in the community. Gradually, these youngsters may achieve the same status and social position within the community as the pasawink as they grow older and prove to be respectable persons. The Salesian scheme offers young men an alternative to having to wait for decades before reaching a position of leadership and prestige. Young men are selected by the Salesians to become catechists; they are taught how to read and write in order to give them access to the Bible and other written texts; they receive training by the priests and are licensed to lead official church activities in their communities. In short, they can become important leaders in the community, acquire new skills, receive delegated authority from the priest and have exclusive access to a new source of religious legitimacy that has the prestige of a written text.

Many young men consider this Salesian offer hard to resist. As a consequence, in many communities the pasawink have regarded the rise of these catechists as a threat to their social and religious position and influence. The Salesians do not regret this marginalization of customary leaders because 'they have little positive influence on moral behaviour', as one Salesian priest told me euphemistically. He considers customary religion 'to be something of the past'. 'Traditional religions are dangerous', he continued. 'Everything is fear and magic, ignorance and exorcist rituals. All peoples lose these magic ideas. We go for the future'.

In social matters the Salesians are just as paternalistic as on religious topics. In their view the problems the Q'eqchi'es face are caused by lack of education. This holds true not only in the case of religion and moral behaviour, but as regards social problems as well. The Salesian view of social education, like religious education, portrays the Q'eqchi'es as mere receivers of knowledge transmitted to them from outside.

The Salesians themselves are able to provide the religious content, but in social matters they cooperate with state agencies for external content and skills. For example, they invite employees of sub-divisions of the ministry of agriculture to come to the villages to teach the Q'eqchi'es new production

techniques. The Salesians advocate the idea of economic progress through integration in the market economy. In the 129 primary schools and three secondary boarding schools they run as well as in their adult education programmes, they use material produced by the ministry of education; this creates the cultural gap that was discussed in the previous chapter.

The idea that there might be useful and valuable elements within Q'eqchi' religion and economic and health care strategies that might encourage the Salesians to appreciate these elements in their religious and social education is absent. Both in religious and in social matters they believe there has to be a rupture with existing Q'eqchi' representations and practices. Customary practices and representations and indigenous knowledge are all disqualified.

The Salesians promote a religion that disenchants nature and social relations; these are understood in a secular way. However, these secular views on nature and social reality are linked to religiously based morals intended to motivate the individual believer to improve his or her economic performance: God wants man to work hard and improve his or her economic situation. In this way Salesian religion influences social reality.

As to the problematic relations between Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii, the Salesians have a policy of ignoring most of the cultural content of Q'eqchi' identity, while at the same time supporting the notion of "believers in God" as a unit with which to identify. This category includes both believing Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii, thereby reducing the importance of Q'eqchi' identity.

Liberating pastoral work

The Salesians are fiercely criticized by those who follow a clearly opposed pastoral policy. Most of the Dominicans, Scheutists, and Precious Blood Missionaries, some of the diocesan priests and several congregations of religious women have developed a policy of liberating pastoral work. They apply this policy in several parishes including Panzós, Telemán, La Tinta, Tucurú, San Martín Cobán, Chahal and Poptún. They also have considerable influence on diocesan institutions in El Petén and Verapaz, such as the Department of *Pastoral Social*, or Social Pastoral Work, in Cobán. The communities of Xalihá and Samox belong to parishes in which this pastoral policy is pursued.

Liberation theology is the main source of their pastoral orientation, but it has to be stressed that we are dealing here with a very specific blend of pastoral policy which has developed out of the local clergy's experiences within their own social and religious context. This means that the concept of Ecclesiastical Base Communities, for example, a crucial element in liberation theology, has not been taken over in the Q'eqchi' region. There are two

reasons for this.[8] First, the church is dealing with pre-existing local Q'eqchi' communities each with their own community life and structures. It makes no sense to try to install new community forms in order to integrate religious and social practices and reflection. The church cannot claim these pre-existing communities to be "theirs". In the Q'eqchi' region the idea is to reinforce the pre-existing local community structures rather than to replace them with an artificial church community.

Secondly, the religious women and priests carrying out liberating pastoral work are only too aware of the fact that they are external actors intervening in pre-existing local communities. This awareness makes them reluctant to think in terms of Ecclesiastical Base Communities because that concept embodies a rather romantic notion of equality between community members and the clergy. Rather, the clergy in the region consider this relation to be problematic and it is an object of intensive discussions.

In the last twenty years the policy of liberating pastoral work has changed considerably. The most important change constitutes a shift of emphasis from socio-economic issues to socio-cultural ones. In the 1970s the central pastoral method was called "See, Judge and Act". This meant that the laity was encouraged first to observe their situation, then to decide whether this situation is right or wrong in the light of what God wants for man, and finally on the basis of this judgement to take action to change this reality. In Chapter Two we saw that the issues focused on were mainly socio-economic, such as the injustice of low wages or unequal land distribution and land conflicts. Now more attention is paid to customary religious practices and representations and Q'eqchi' culture and identity. The objective of liberating pastoral work is to become rooted in the culture and identity of the Q'eqchi' communities. The clergy who work along these lines no longer want to neglect customary practices and representations or the role of customary community leaders.

As a result, liberating pastoral work now deals directly with the heart of pastoral work: religion itself. The pastoral agents emphasize that they do not have a monopoly on the Catholic message in a pure form; their understanding of it is influenced by their own social and cultural background. In addition, in the various cultures they deal with, such as the Q'eqchi', there are tokens of the presence of Christ to be discovered. Consequently, pastoral work has to focus on reflection by both clergy and laity to discover the legitimate representations and practices stemming both from official texts such as the Bible and from existing religious practices and representations in this case of the Q'eqchi'es. This is what they understand by "inculturation of God's Word".

Of course there are standard Catholic representations, dogmas and practices, and every priest and religious woman is supposed to promote

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[8]. Only in the neighbourhoods of Cobán, San Martín parish, are five communities that come close to the concept of Base Communities.

them. However, in the practice of pastoral work there is considerable room for interpretation and the protagonists of liberating pastoral work try to legitimate existing Q'eqchi' religious meanings and practices and aim to strengthen the role of customary leaders such as the pasawink. Official Catholic practices and representations are articulated with customary ones.

This objective of articulation is most clearly visible in the various efforts at liturgical renewal in the region. Experiments to develop a Q'eqchi' Mass have taken place in several parishes. In these experiments various customary rituals and symbols have been integrated into the formal structure of the Mass. The crucial point is that the main ingredient of the Eucharist, the Sacred Host, is made of wheat, but it can take the form of a *tortilla*[9], which of course is much more relevant to the Q'eqchi'es. For example in Poptún the Mass is sometimes celebrated in customary sacred places such as in a cave or on the bank of a river. It includes the offering of maize, meat, candles and copal pom.[10] The sacred land is addressed, food and cocoa are served by the pasawink and customary dances are performed. These are typical ingredients of customary practices (see next chapter).

Liberating pastoral work aims at providing a leading role for pasawink not only in their communities but in the church as well. In the parish there is a pasawink council which is consulted on all important aspects of pastoral work. Representatives of pasawink from the various communities gather regularly in the parish church to exchange knowledge about customary rituals. They talk about Q'eqchi' history and identity, and encourage one another to continue or renew the performance of customary practices in their communities. In the parish of Chahal the pasawink council organizes the yearly pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of *Qana' Itzam* near Cahabón to perform the customary ritual of *mayejak*.[11] In several parishes the priest has asked the pasawink to "purify" customary practices and meanings. The results of their purification remain unclear, but several pasawink told me that the performance of "customs" includes having a few cups of *b'oj*[12] but not getting drunk. The issue of drinking has become an ideological one because the Salesians - and the evangelical churches - equate customary rituals with getting drunk.

In principle, the pastoral agents who promote liberating pastoral work understand social relations and treat nature in a profane way, but linked to a religiously based moral judgement of social reality. They take an anti-capitalist position and distrust market integration.

The attention paid to socio-cultural matters does not keep the advocates of liberating pastoral work from taking many initiatives focused on social matters. The parishes, the Bishopric of Verapaz and the Vicariate of

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[9]. Little pancake made of maize: an indispensable ingredient of every meal.
[10]. Copal pom is made of resin and is usually burned on ceremonial occasions.
[11]. Sacrifice ritual addressing the mountain, see next chapter.
[12]. Local liquor made of sugar cane.

El Petén all have their social projects. In particular, the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the diocese of Verapaz is very active in this respect. It has grown out of the emergency efforts to welcome the displaced people who came down from the mountains after hiding from the army for several years. The Department still spends a major part of its resources on a number of projects dedicated to the communities where these families have settled. After starting these projects for displaced families, the Department began to work with other communities affected by violence, mainly in the parish of San Martín Cobán. The Department has also set up a legal assistance department to provide legal assistance to communities with land problems with landlords and with INTA. Chapter Six contains a more extensive discussion of the Social Pastoral Work projects.

The Department tries to strike a balance between assisting the local communities and avoiding taking responsibility for solving their problems. One of the explicit aims of these projects is that everyone in the local community should participate; they should take the initiative themselves, and any material assistance must be matched by instruction that enables them to run the project themselves. The Department's aim is to encourage them to solve their problems themselves using their own resources, technologies and skills. Instruction and training begin with an appreciation of indigenous knowledge and an attempt is made to add external knowledge that reinforces their own initiatives and strategies. The Department tries to refrain from creating a dependent attitude. This means that the Department is very restrictive in providing material assistance free; in principle loans are the norm.

This objective has motivated the Department to set up a network of *agentes multiplicadores de pastoral social.* The idea is to invite each local community to select one of its members - preferably not a catechist to avoid concentration of functions - to become a multiplicador. The multiplicador's task is to motivate the local community to undertake efforts to solve its social problems. The multiplicador is the link between the community and the Department. He receives training from the Department and is supposed to pass this knowledge on to his community. He seeks assistance from the Department when his community decides to take an initiative to solve some of its problems.

The network of multiplicadores de pastoral social should not be understood as an effort to create a trade union or a political organization; it is an organization of communities to promote self help and ethnic identity. The clergy promoting liberating pastoral work encourage the Q'eqchi'es to identify with a Q'eqchi' ethnic group. They draw attention to the customary practices and meanings the Q'eqchi'es have in common, encourage catechists and pasawink at the parish and diocesan level to discuss these matters, and

play an active role in reinventing Q'eqchi' tradition.[13] These activities all encourage the emergence of a supra-local Q'eqchi' identity on the one hand. On the other, the positive attitude towards customary practices and meanings entails a symbolic reinforcement of the identification with family and local community. The pastoral agents concerned do not conceive of this ethnic identity as a step towards national integration or a national identity.

Between two extremes

The concept of sacramentalist in its encompassing version described above is put into practice in some five parishes, the encompassing concept of liberating pastoral work in some seven parishes. Consequently, not all the clergy in the Q'eqchi' region can be linked neatly to one of the two lines of pastoral work. In most parishes the clergy take a position in between these extremes applying a policy that has elements of both. These clergy do not have an explicit policy of either encouraging or confronting customary practices and the influence of the pasawink. They just let them go their own way without much interference.

Nevertheless, tensions between the clergy over various pastoral policies often dominate diocesan institutions and programmes. Radio Tezulutlán usually transmits a modest positive picture of customary religion, while the same station's programmes transmitted from the Salesian *Centro Radial* in Carchá occasionally ridicules customs. The diocesan training programme for catechists representatives was paralysed for some time in 1991. The Dominicans had organized several courses in which a parallel was drawn between the people of Israel and the Mayan people, and elements of the history and culture of the Maya were presented. These courses were received very positively in the majority of parishes, but it caused the Salesians to withdraw their catechists for some time.

The Salesian-run parishes refuse to send representatives to the multiplicadores programme and the Department of Social Pastoral Work finds it very difficult to work effectively in these parishes. The Salesian primary schools' programme is rejected in the parish of San Martín (Cobán) because according to the priests of this parish it is the responsibility of the state to set up schools. The conflict ran high when a few communities in this

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[13]. This reinvention refers not only to tradition, but also to specific customary practices and meanings that the clergy want to integrate in the Mass. The picture they present of the history of the Maya in catechist training courses and the parallels they draw with the people of Israel is very positive but may not stand the test of historiographical scrutiny (see Wilson 1995: 268-274). Several Q'eqchi'es who participated in "Q'eqchi'-ized" Masses told me that they were unfamiliar with several of the specific practices that were presented by the priests as having a specific Q'eqchi' character. Nevertheless, most of the participants said they were very positive about the fact itself that the priests tried to adapt the Mass to their *na'leb*, their culture, and that they felt appreciated as Q'eqchi'es.

parish accepted Salesian teachers who interfered in religious matters in the communities.

3.2.2 *Evangelical churches*[14]

The reader may have been astonished to learn that the Catholic church retains missionary characteristics after a presence of several centuries in the Q'eqchi' region while the largest of the evangelical churches, the Iglesia del Nazareno, officially has a mature status. This church established its presence at the beginning of this century and in 1974 the district of Verapaz became a regular Nazarene district: the first one outside the United States. The Nazarene church in Verapaz functions independently in institutional and financial matters.[15]

The Nazarene church is not the only example of an evangelical church that can only be understood as a fundamentally Guatemalan institution. Most of the evangelical churches began as initiatives by missionaries from the United States. In their initial years these churches were heavily dependent on resources and guidance from North American centres. Moreover, institutions and foundations linked to the United States government had clear geo-political reasons for supporting the spread of these churches all over Latin America.[16] However, most of these churches rapidly reduced much of their external dependence, are staffed by Guatemalans, and their functioning can only be understood by conceiving of them as Guatemalan institutions in the Guatemalan context.

I have not concentrated very much on the institutional level of these churches, but I have studied the evangelical churches at the local level in the villages I have worked in. Most of the results of this study will be presented in the next chapter. In this section the various categories of churches, the characteristics of their discourse, the main explanations that are put forward to explain their rapid expansion in the last two decades and their relations with the Catholic church will be outlined. This outline is based on information provided mainly by Catholic priests, evangelical lay leaders and the relevant literature about evangelical churches in Guatemala.

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[14]. I use the overall term "evangelical" to include all churches that are usually referred to as "historical protestant", "evangelical" in the narrow sense, "Holiness", Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal. I avoid the term protestant because it has a negative connotation in the region. If they are addressed politely they are called *'los hermanos de la capilla'*, *i.e.* the brothers of the evangelical church.

[15]. Samandú 1989: 32-33.

[16]. See Dominguez 1994: 12-22; Huntington 1994: 23-33; Stoll 1990.

Categories of evangelical churches

The main evangelical churches in the region can be classified into four categories. First, there are the historical churches, which have their origin in the Sixteenth century Reformation in Europe. Their discourse emphasizes the importance of the Bible and of doctrine, but the ministers do not have an exclusive relation with the sacred world in the way Catholic priests do through their monopoly over the administration of sacraments. Nevertheless, the ministers of these churches have received extensive theological and pastoral training. Their relations with the believers and the services are formal and their services are not very participatory.[17] The main representatives of this category of churches in the Q'eqchi' region are the Baptist church and the Mennonite church.

The historical churches hardly ever criticise the Q'eqchi'es for practising customary rituals and accept responsibility for social problems. In the Q'eqchi' region they run a few primary schools[18] and some small-scale health projects. The Mennonites have two local clinics and twelve health promoters in the region. Moreover, they also provide agricultural training, dig wells, and build latrines, and have a few local literacy groups.

The second category of evangelical churches is made up of the so-called "Holiness" churches. The Nazarene's church is the largest "Holiness" church in the Q'eqchi' region. It emphasizes personal conversion and the work of the Holy Spirit. This work becomes apparent in the moral behaviour of individual converts; it is through this behaviour that salvation is to be achieved. Central doctrinal issues are the holiness of Christ, the redemption of sins through Christ's sacrifice, His resurrection and imminent return. Praying, moral behaviour, dedication to God and the Bible, proselytising efforts, church attendance and the need to avoid being contaminated by the world in order to save one's soul from sin are the most important practices that these churches promote. The Nazarenes' services have a rather austere and moderate character and Bible-study meetings are important. Their position on customary rituals is rather negative; these are considered to be contradictory to the Bible's message.[19]

The ministers of the Nazarene church receive a thorough theological training, first in the *Instituto Bíblico Nazareno* in Cobán, and then in the *Instituto Teológico Nazareno* in the capital. They are elected for two years with a 75 per cent vote by the members of the local church. They work together with *mayordomos* who are elected by every fifty believers and are supervised by the district superintendent.[20]

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[17]. See Similox Salazar 1991: 7, 10, 14-15, 20-21, 26.
[18]. In the whole country the number of schools they run has reached 90: Similox 1991: 21.
[19]. Similox Salazar 1991: 7, 11, 16, 21-22, 26-27; Samandú 1989: 35.
[20]. Samandú 1989: 32-33.

The Nazarenes do not want to be contaminated by the world, but they do not portray the world as the devil's arena either. They are not indifferent to social reality. They run some schools and they have set up the *Centro Educativo Kekchí* in Cobán. Their organization, the *Asociación Guatemalteca de Beneficiencia* (AGUABEN) provides medical services and helps communities to build water wells. The Nazarenes have a charity project for children, widows and orphans.

Pentecostal churches constitute the third category of evangelical churches. There are many of these churches in the region, but the largest ones are the *Asamblea de Dios*, the *Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo*, and the *Príncipe de Paz* church. The latter is an original Guatemalan initiative. They have much in common with the Nazarene church, including the practices they require the believer to perform, the central importance of the Holy Spirit's work and of the Bible, and literal interpretation of the Bible.

However, there are several important differences. The work and gifts of the Holy Spirit are expressed not only in correct moral behaviour, but also in ecstatic and emotional experiences, singing, dancing, speaking in tongues, miracles, appearances, the laying on of hands and spiritual healing. Their meetings in which these things take place are massive. The preaching in their services does not focus on doctrine nor is it intellectual, but rather emotional. Preaching 'is not directed to the mind, but to the heart'.[21]

Another difference is the strong charismatic character of Pentecostal ministers. They have a direct influence on everything and they stress personal contact with the believers. Pentecostal ministers have had little theological training, not do they have a monopoly on explaining Bible texts or on the experience of the baptism by the Holy Spirit. The individual believer has access to the Bible and his or her direct experiences of the presence of the Holy Spirit need no mediation by a minister. As a result there is little to prevent believers from establishing a separate church. There is a strong tendency towards fragmentation in a countless number of churches.

Pentecostal churches are characterized by the use of simple black-and-white oppositions such as that between the world - the arena of the devil - and the church - the only source of salvation in Christ. In their view it makes no sense to try to improve the situation of the world, the only thing that counts is to seek for salvation in Christ, to follow His demands, and to join His struggle against Satan. After all, at the imminent end of time Christ will return and save the world. They consider social projects and customary rituals to be irrelevant or even pagan.[22] However, Pentecostalism encourages the believer to push for economic advancement because this is conceived of as an expression of the blessing of Christ.[23]

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[21]. Similox Salazar 1991: 23.
[22]. Similox Salazar 1991: 7-8, 17-19, 23-27; Martínez, Samandú 1990: 58-61.
[23]. Garrard 1986: 194.

The neo-Pentecostals constitute the final category of evangelical churches. Their religious discourse and practices and their view of the world have much in common with Pentecostal churches. They are marked by a strong feeling of being God's chosen people with a special mission. Dictator General Efraín Ríos Montt, who governed the country between March 1992 and August 1993 and drove through the cruellest schemes of counter-insurgency, proclaimed that his special mission was to save the country from Satan's onslaught. He is a member of the neo-Pentecostal church of *El Verbo*.

The most significant practical difference between the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches is the fact that the former concentrate their proselytising efforts on the indigenous and poor ladino people while the latter focus on the middle and upper classes. The number of converts to neo-Pentecostal churches in the Q'eqchi' region has remained low.[24]

Another category of churches that have established a foothold within the Q'eqchi' region are considered to be on the margin of the Christian tradition: the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons. Their numbers of converts have remained rather small.

Quantitative growth and its explanations

In the last two decades evangelical churches have experienced impressive growth in terms of their numbers of members, converts and local churches, but not all have had the same success. Reliable numbers referring to this growth in the Q'eqchi' region are not available. The data that are available do not cover the Q'eqchi' region. Nevertheless, in Table 3.1 the number of established local churches in the three departments that include most of the Q'eqchi' region are presented.

Table 3.1: number of evangelical churches in three departments in 1980 and 1987[25]

Department/evangelical churches	Total 1980	Total 1987
Alta Verapaz	213	537
El Petén	263	420
Izabal	304	451

[24]. Similox Salazar 1991: 8, 19-20, 25-26; Martínez, Samandú 1990: 48.
[25]. Source: Opazo Bernales 1990: 37-38, based on figures from the evangelical institute PROCADES.

Established churches are those that have a minimum membership of about twenty members which in the Q'eqchi' region means more or less twenty families. These churches have a council of elders or deacons, a full-time minister and a church building.[26] Many local churches do not meet these criteria and hence have missionary status; this means that in practice the numbers of local churches is much higher.

Assuming that the average membership per church has not fallen dramatically, that the trends are similar in the Q'eqchi' region, and that within that region the trends among the aj Kastii are similar to those among the Q'eqchi'es a first conclusion is clear: the number of evangelical Q'eqchi'es has risen dramatically between 1980 and 1987. My own estimates based on interviews with evangelical leaders and with priests and religious women in every parish, point to between twenty and thirty per cent of Q'eqchi'es belonging to an evangelical church in 1991/1992. In addition, these interviews allow me to conclude that, despite the fact that the largest evangelical church is a "Holiness" one - the Nazarene church - the overwhelming majority of evangelical churches are Pentecostal.

The growth of evangelical churches, especially Pentecostal ones, is a national phenomenon in Guatemala. The earthquake of 1976 is generally considered to be the starting point for this rise. Guatemalan authors and spokesmen have put forward several reasons why Guatemalans have resorted to evangelical churches in massive numbers since then.

The first explanation points to the weakness of the main competitor in the religious field: with state support evangelical churches have occupied the space left fallow by the Catholic church. Nationwide, the Catholic church presents a similar picture as in the Q'eqchi' region: it is still in a process of restoration, it did not establish a stable presence in the daily life of believers in several parts of the country, and because of the violence around 1980 it had to disappear from many of the conflict-ridden areas of Guatemala. The Catholic church was attacked explicitly by the army in these areas - it even had to close the entire diocese of El Quiché in 1980 after dozens of catechists and several priests had been killed and the bishop just managed to escape from several assaults - while evangelical churches were encouraged by the army to increase their proselytising work in these areas. Conversion to an evangelical church offered a safe haven in a violent context.

Almost all of the evangelical churches urged their believers to abstain from involvement in politics and when general Efraín Ríos Montt took over the presidency many ministers felt that the struggle against Satan could really take off. In many parts of the country ministers did not hesitate to accuse priests and Catholics of being communist, with the obvious consequences. However, especially before the presidency of Ríos Montt the evangelical churches did not act as a 'politically conservative monolith'. Part

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[26]. See Similox Salazar 1991: 60.

of the evangelical churches even went so far as to support the guerrilla.[27] Nevertheless, the fact that most of the evangelical churches sided with the army cannot be denied.

Similar ideological arguments have been put forward by several people in the Q'eqchi' region concerning the relations between the evangelical churches and finca administrators and owners. On the coffee fincas many administrators and owners explicitly try to keep Catholic pastoral agents out, while actively supporting the evangelical churches in their search for converts among the Q'eqchi'es living on their fincas. Evangelical churches teach their members to accept all worldly authority, including finca owners and administrators.

Explanations pointing to the relative advantages of evangelical churches vis-à-vis the Catholic church are complemented by a second category of explanations emphasizing the internal logic of development of the evangelical churches. In this kind of explanations it is maintained that following several decades of preparation the groundwork had been laid for successful conversion campaigns by 1976. Massive conversions were the logical outcome of painstaking preparations in terms of Bible translations into indigenous languages, literacy projects to enable converts to read the Bible, and efforts to train and instruct indigenous local church leaders and preachers. Samandú supports this argument with extensive data from the evangelical churches in Guatemala in general and the Iglesia del Nazareno in Alta Verapaz in particular.[28]

Garrard is not convinced by this argument. She says that the evangelical churches did not grow faster in communities where this groundwork had been laid than in communities where this was not the case. According to her, evangelical churches did not grow faster among ethnic groups which benefited from much translation work than among those that had little access to written material in their language. She maintains that radio broadcasting - the evangelical churches have set up several full-time radio channels and regularly buy time on commercial radio networks - had much more impact on a mainly illiterate population.[29] In any case, the evangelical churches were there and prepared to receive massive numbers of new converts when the opportunity to do so arose.

These are explanations for the growth of evangelical, especially Pentecostal churches in the country as a whole. To what extent these explanations apply in the case of the Q'eqchi' region is hard to say, but some remarks can be made. To begin with, the areas that have been struck by massive violence (Cobán, Chisec, Playa Grande, Sayaxché, El Estor) have a considerable evangelical Q'eqchi' population - up to one third of the Q'eqchi' population. Also in areas where coffee fincas dominate, one third of

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[27]. Garrard 1986: 208-214.
[28]. Samandú 1989: 30-32; Samandú 1990: 81-88.
[29]. Garrard 1986: 198.

the Q'eqchi' population belongs to an evangelical church. Most of the fincas do have several evangelical churches on their territory. There are relatively low percentages of evangelicals in those areas that have not suffered from massive violence and in which there are relatively few and small coffee fincas.

On the one hand these facts confirm the supposition that violence and coffee fincas do influence evangelical growth, but on the other hand these percentages of evangelicals are not very much higher than the twenty to thirty per cent of Q'eqchi' population, which is the average percentage in the whole Q'eqchi' region. Consequently, other factors such as the translation of the Bible into the Q'eqchi' language must be taken into account. Moreover, simple population growth could account for the absolute growth in the number of evangelicals. For instance, the town of San Juan Chamelco has about 5,000 inhabitants. Almost all of them are Q'eqchi' and more than half the population belongs to an evangelical church. By far the most important is the Nazarene church. It has been there since the beginning of the century and an important part of the Nazarene community was born into their church. In any case, the crucial question is why so many Q'eqchi'es have converted to an evangelical church. Their motivations for doing so will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.3 Local religious specialists

Priests, religious women and ministers visit local communities occasionally. The religious practices and related meanings they promote and local church life in general in both rural and urban communities are organized and led by local religious leaders. Customary practices and meanings are promoted by leaders such as the chinames and pasawink. These local religious specialists, *i.e.* those belonging to the local community and playing a leading role in religious matters, are the subject of this section.[30] They include customary leaders, catechists and evangelical leaders.

3.3.1 *Customary leaders*

The customary local specialists that will be dealt with here are the *chinames*, the *cofradías* and *hermandades*, the *pasawink*, and the *aj ilonel* or *aj tuul*.

[30]. Information on these local specialists was gathered by interviewing Catholic pastoral agents and ministers, and local leaders in Xalihá, Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec.

Chinames

Chinames are a religious institution that was established in the Q'eqchi' region as a result of Catholic colonialism[31], but since then chinames have become an integral element in customary religion. All the villages I visited, including those founded rather recently, had one or more lines of chinames. Chinames are a rural institution; in the urban context they are called cofradía or hermandad.

Only couples, *i.e.* men and women who have started their own household, can be chinames. Both the man and the woman of the couple are called chinam. They are assisted by *mertomes*, who may be single men. Chinames are always organized in a hierarchical way. The first couple of chinames (*xb'enil*) commands the second (*xkab'il*), the second commands the third (*roxil*), and so on. In general this hierarchy consists of about five couples, sometimes assisted by up to twenty mertomes. In the villages I studied, relations between the chinames were based on cooperation, not on authority. Chinames are almost always dedicated to one or more specific saints, usually the patron saints of the community. The village of Samox has two lines of chinames, one dedicated to *Santa María* and *San José*, and the other to *Jesus Nazareno*.

The "office" of chinam rotates. A couple is chinam for one or two years and then they look for substitutes. The new couple are presented to the whole community which has to approve of them and during the patron saint's feast the "change of chinames" takes place. This event may encompass various rituals, but in any case the leaving xb'enil explains the obligations to the new chinames and the statue of a saint is handed over to the new xb'enil. This may be the statue of the patron saint, but this is not necessarily the case.

The election of a couple as chinam is a token of the respect they are held in by the community. This respect is accumulated by service to the community and cooperating in community tasks for a considerable number of years. Over the years a couple first becomes mertomes and then slowly passes through the levels in the chinames hierarchy. Despite the fact that chinames are expected to contribute substantially to religious feasts celebrated by the whole community, there is no relation at all between the economic performance of a household and which couples are chosen as chinam. In the four local communities I studied in detail, those who are chinam or have served as chinam are equally distributed over the various categories of economic stratification. In order to meet their financial obligations chinames may organize special economic activities such as the running of village shops.

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[31]. See Oss, van 1986: 89-92, 109-115.

The tasks the chinames execute are twofold. First, they have their obligations towards the Catholic church. They take care of the building and the cemetery, they keep the church clean and decorate or repair it, and they organize the construction of a new one if necessary. They keep the keys to the building, the chinam women put fresh flowers on the altar every few weeks, and the xb'enil welcomes the priest when he visits.

The second task of the chinames is to organize customary rituals that are performed by the community as a whole, especially the feast of the patron saint. They take care of all practical matters on these occasions. They fix a date for the celebrations, visit the households to ask for contributions - Q. 5 to Q. 20 from each household in Samox - and are expected to contribute the lion's share themselves, which can be as high as Q. 250, or a pig in the villages of Rubelpec and Xalihá. They ensure that the statues to be carried in the processions are in good shape and organize the music (harp, violin, *chirimía*, or marimba). The women prepare the meal which the men serve. They ensure that there are enough candles and copal pom, the standard ingredients of all customary rituals, and they receive guests such as social scientists from foreign countries. The role of the chinames in customary rituals is mainly practical. They do not lead these rituals or give speeches or talks in public usually. In other words, they do not have an important discursive role.

This second task of the chinames is the most controversial. In Samox and Xalihá chinames perform these tasks in an all-encompassing way, but in Chaabilchoch they do not perform any customary rituals at the community level at all. In Rubelpec their customary tasks are limited to the patron saint's feast, but in the next chapter it will be shown that this feast has lost much of its importance there.

These differences regarding the customary role of chinames coincide with differences in the policy the various parishes apply. Based on interviews with priests and others who have a regional overview and confirmed by data from the four case studies, the general picture emerges that in the parishes run by protagonists of liberating pastoral work - Samox and Xalihá belong to these - the chinames perform both categories of tasks and are regarded as important leaders in all kinds of community affairs.

In the Salesian-staffed parishes the role of chinames is limited to the first task. They are incorporated into the regular parish-promoted activities and are urged by the priests and catechists to relinquish customary practices. In Chaabilchoch the existing line of chinames "of the community", *i.e.* those elected by the community and responsible for taking care of the church *and* customary activities, was supplanted by a new line of chinames "of the centre" when the parish established its centre buildings in Chaabilchoch. This latter line of chinames consists of four chinames with eight mertomes; their tasks are limited to the first one. The chinames of the community are no longer active.

In Rubelpec several chinames cooperate with the catechists, but it has become increasingly difficult to find new couples willing to become chinames. As the acting male xb'enil told me: 'They do not appreciate it any more because they hear new messages'. Some relate this difficulty to the fact that the chinames are expected to contribute a considerable amount of money to the celebration of the patron saint's feast, but it seems more likely that the motivation to become a chinam has diminished considerably because chinames no longer play a prominent role in religious activities in Rubelpec. In Xalihá, where the average income per household is lower than in Rubelpec (see Chapter Seven) and where the contributions expected from chinames are similar, the chinames have no problem in finding new couples to replace them.

The role and importance of the chinames is not only influenced by parish policy; the evangelical churches do not accept the role of chinames at all. I have not come across a single community in which there is any cooperation between chinames and an evangelical church. However, the same rotating principle of electing a mayordomo as a representative of a group of fifty members every two years is applied in the Iglesia del Nazareno.

Cofradías and hermandades

Cofradías and hermandades are the urban variants of the chinames organization. Most of the towns in the Q'eqchi' region have one or more of these hermandades and cofradías, especially the larger towns of Carchá and Cobán. Carchá has two important hermandades - those who wear a *túnica blanca* and those who wear a *túnica morada* - and at least fifteen cofradías. In Cobán there are six or seven hermandades and at least eight cofradías. However, even the small town of Lívingston has seven cofradías. Both terms, cofradías and hermandades, are often confused. Nevertheless, in general the hermandades take charge of activities and feasts during Holy Week and in some towns at Christmas as well, whereas the cofradías are dedicated to a specific saint and celebrate the feast day of this saint.

Their organizational structures are different as well. For example the *Hermandad del Calvario* in Cobán consists of a council made up of representatives of the local communities in the neighbourhoods to which the hermandad belongs. There is also a committee which organizes and leads the Holy Week processions. The communities elect the members of this committee. Like other cofradías, the *Cofradía of San Martín*, based in the same neighbourhoods as the Hermandad del Calvario, is organized on the same principle as the chinames: the hierarchy of xb'enil, xkab'il, roxil, xkaahil, etc. Several people in these neighbourhoods told me that the members of the committee and of the cofradía had to be more than just respectable persons. The president of the committee and the xb'enil of the cofradía in particular need to have a lot of money as well. For example, the former is expected to

spend a lot on food that is served to hundreds of people at his home on the Tuesday of Holy Week. This argument is reinforced by the fact that the acting president and the xb'enil are the same person. So in contrast to the chinames, we have here a confirmation of the relation between economic performance and presidency of a confraternity.

Some of the hermandades and cofradías are quite large organizations. For instance the túnicas blancas and the túnicas moradas have each between 200 and 300 members. It is not just town dwellers who participate, villagers from communities close to the town join in the activities as well. Most of the cofradías and hermandades have a communitarian basis in one or more neighbourhoods.

Ethnic and cultural issues play an important role in these organizations. The membership of most of them is confined to Q'eqchi'es, but the most prominent have a mixed Q'eqchi' and aj Kastii membership. The *Hermandad del Señor Sepultado*, a prestigious hermandad which belongs to the cathedral, is led by middle-class aj Kastii who walk at the head of the processions, while those who carry the heavy structures on which the statues of the saints are borne, are Q'eqchi'es.

This example reflects the historically ambivalent character of confraternities in Guatemala. In the previous chapter we saw that, on the one hand, they have a Spanish origin and were used to collect tribute in colonial times and to organize forced labour until recently. On the other hand, they have become indigenized and play an important role in the reproduction of customary religion.[32]

In Cobán and other towns cofradías and hermandades constitute arenas in which ethnic and political power relations become visible. On the one hand they reflect existing power relations, as the example of the Hermandad del Señor Sepultado shows. On the other, the fact that the Hermandad del Calvario - which is exclusively made up of Q'eqchi'es - decided a few years ago to say their prayers during the processions in Q'eqchi' is considered by many an important symbol of Q'eqchi' emancipation. Before that time the members of this hermandad held their discussions at internal meetings in Q'eqchi' but in public they spoke and prayed in Spanish.

Cofradías can also be a reflection of rather harmonious inter-ethnic relations as is shown by the *Cofradía de San Isidro* in the town of Lívingston. This cofradía is made up both of Q'eqchi'es from neighbouring villages and Garífunas living in the town. Despite their very divergent cultures both ethnic groups are able to jointly organize and satisfactorily celebrate the feast of their saint in May, as several members of both groups told me.

The priests of Lívingston approve of the feast and the role played by the cofradía, but in many other parishes priests are not very positive about

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[32]. See Falla 1979: 78; Cabarrús 1979: 56-57.

the cofradías and hermandades. The Salesians in Carchá take a rather hostile stance towards them. 'People get drunk, these rituals are meaningless and cost a lot of money', one of the Salesians told me. Interestingly, the Salesians have not been able to suppress the confraternities in the town of Carchá, while in the villages they have been much more successful in incorporating the chinames into parish-promoted discipline. In the parish of San Marcos (Cobán), the cofradías have only recently been incorporated in parish structures and have restored relations with the priests. In San Martín parish (Cobán) the clergy legitimate their activities and try to work with them, but this work is not given high priority.

Several respondents in various towns told me that the zest for participating in the confraternities has lessened in recent times. The number of active cofradías is dwindling. The willingness of Q'eqchi'es from neighbouring villages to participate has decreased and the same holds true in the case of many youngsters in the towns. It is becoming increasingly difficult to gather enough people to carry the saints in the processions.

Pasawink

A couple who have served as chinames and reached a respectable age are regarded as pasawink[33], or wise old men and women. In Xalihá and Samox they are consulted over every important community issue, and several of them take the lead in the performance of customary rituals. Here pasawink have a rather discursive role: they pray in the name of the whole community at customary rituals and they transmit knowledge on customary rituals and meanings to the youth of the community. Pasawink in both Xalihá and Samox told me that they feel very much supported by the council of pasawink in their respective parishes.

In both Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec the role of the pasawink is much more limited. In Chaabilchoch the leading catechist, called *ministro*, told me that before the village was appointed as a parish centre a few years ago, the pasawink would meet to discuss and plan every activity that was to take place. Since then, the pasawink have been marginalized from decisions concerning the church. In Rubelpec there is a group of pasawink who join the catechists in Saturday meetings to prepare the celebration of the Word the next day; but they do not play a very specific role in either the preparation or the celebration.

In both communities there is a group of pasawink who do not participate in the celebration of the Word and who want to continue customary practices. They are rather isolated and some of them are accused of being witches. One of the pasawink in Rubelpec expressed his sense of

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[33]. Literally, the term *pasawink* refers only to men and *pasaixq* is the relevant Q'eqchi' word for elderly women, but the term pasawink is often used related to a couple of an elderly man and woman.

grievance against the catechists: 'They [the catechists - hs] think they are saints, but we cannot put ourselves above God'. According to some Rubelpec pasawink the younger generation are not interested in customary practices and meanings any more; they are beginning to forget these practices, so there is little transmission of knowledge from the pasawink to the young people. This vital channel of communication and reproduction of customary religion barely functions.

The reduced role of pasawink in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec is closely related to the policy the Salesian priests have been pursuing towards customary practices. Their attitude to these practices is negative but they do not attack them openly. In the words of one of the catechists of Chaabilchoch:

> 'The priests do not say no nor yes, but we prefer to stay with what the priests tell us. The priests say it is all right to go to Tactic or Esquipulas [customary sacred places - hs] if we have the money to do so; if not we had better not go. Moreover, they say that we have our own place to pray and be heard here in the community.'

In short, the priests do not prohibit customary practices; they just say these practices are superfluous: it is not necessary to perform them when the villagers stick to parish-promoted practices. By their way of talking about customary religion they create an opposition between customary religion associated with moral vices such as drinking, dancing and adultery on the one hand and parish promoted practices, Biblical issues and moral behaviour on the other. The implicit consequences of this method of dealing with customary religion was accurately discerned by one of the pasawink in Rubelpec: 'Customs have disappeared, because the priests and the bishop are praying that they may disappear and now everything has changed'.

A similar pattern regarding the pasawink emerges as in the case of the chinames: in Dominican influenced or staffed parishes the pasawink retain a predominant role in community and parish life promoting customary practices. In Salesian run parishes the pasawink are either incorporated into parish policy or they are marginalized, which means that their role within the community is curtailed.

Aj ilonel and aj tuul

Sometimes pasawink are also iloneles; such is the case in Xalihá. Here the leading pasawink is a famous ilonel and chairman of the council of pasawink in the parish of Chahal.

Both aj iloneles and aj tuules may use their connections with mighty "persons" in the universe either to cure a patient or to inflict damage on someone. An aj ilonel is a customary healer whereas an aj tuul is a witch. I

interviewed five iloneles in four different communities and all denied any suggestion that they also work as aj tuules, but in each of these communities several villagers told me that every aj ilonel is also an aj tuul. He - I have not come across any female aj ilonel - can use his influence for both good and evil purposes.

The aj iloneles I talked to did not know each other and their communities are situated very far apart. Nevertheless, I was surprised by the similarity of information they gave me about what they do and about the basic ideas that guide their work. This was despite the fact that there is quite some secrecy involved in their methods and ideas, not only about their aj tuul activities. One of the things they want to remain secret is the amount of money they charge for their treatments.

Every treatment by an aj ilonel starts with prayers after which the aj ilonel takes the patient's arm. By feeling his or her pulse and blood circulation the aj ilonel is able to diagnose the illness and to determine how much life the patient still has. Life is not considered to be something that exists or does not exist; the amount of life a person has is variable and can be quantified. Having a "shortage" of life means being ill.

The aj ilonel treats several categories of illness; some such as malaria are universally known; other kinds of diseases belong to the specific customary classifications of the Q'eqchi'es. The latter kinds of diseases include for example *rilomil tzuul, xiw,* and *awas.* A patient suffering from rilomil tzuul, or 'seen by the mountain', suddenly starts to vomit, faints, is depressed, loses his or her memory, gets a headache and looks black or pale. Soon the person will die. In the case of xiw, 'spirit loss' or 'fright', a person loses his or her spirit, it leaves the person's body. All of a sudden the person starts to shake and sweat, his or her temperature fluctuates, he or she falls backwards, goes insane and will die in a few days. Awas is the expression and result of an offense against someone or something in the neighbourhood. Everything and every "person" has its specific rules which Q'eqchi'es must respect. For example, if Q'eqchi'es do not observe all the specific ritual rules they are supposed to obey when they plant their maize, this maize may adopt very strange forms and illnesses (see next chapter).

A nice example of awas is expressed in the following story which one of the iloneles told me. Once a few merchants came to his village to buy cardamom. The villagers told the merchants they were willing to sell, but they should return later. The merchants wanted to do so after some time, but the villagers did not want to sell because the prices were too low. They sent a boy to the merchants to tell them that the cardamom was not ready yet. Despite this, the merchants came to the village, became angry, started to make trouble and finally left. Two weeks later the boy became seriously ill with stomach problems. The ilonel examined him and concluded he was bewitched. He prayed to God to improve the boy's life, to maintain good relations with God, and he gave him an extract of herbs to drink. The boy vomited and threw up cardamom shells.

This story shows that disturbed relations with someone in the patient's vicinity causes the patient to become ill. It is a physical expression of a social problem, and can only be cured by turning to God to restore the patient's amount of life. The iloneles I spoke to told me several stories of this type which share the idea that the cause of illness is to be found in disturbed relations with someone or something imbued with a spirit in the surroundings of the patient or in the universe.

The main role the aj ilonel plays is to add to the life of the patient and to restore the disturbed relations with the "ones" who are able to provide life. He has a repertoire of prayers at his disposal. For every illness there is a special prayer, which he repeats several times in the presence of the patient. Each prayer is dedicated to a special important "person" in the universe, which can be a saint or a mountain or God. Santa María is specially important in this respect. This repertoire of prayers is complemented by a repertoire of herbs. Each herb has a medicinal impact for a specific disease. The ilonel searches for the specific herb which the patient is supposed to make tea with and drink or bath in. The idea of adding to the life of someone with prayers and herbs is very apparent in the fact that iloneles are often called in when a woman is pregnant but unable to give sufficient life to the embryo. Sometimes the aj ilonel also gives meat and tortillas to the patient to eat or to place on special parts of his or her body to feed the illness. Such feeding may convince the illness to leave the patient.

Not every community has an ilonel but iloneles in some communities, such as the ones in Xalihá, are famous enough to draw patients from far away places to visit them to be cured. Some train classes of young boys to become iloneles whereas others have a delicate and conflictual position in the community. The conflict may be due to the fact that they are suspected of being aj tuul as well which induces fear in other community members. The very negative attitude of ministers and Salesian priests in particular towards them is also partly responsible for the uneasy role they play in their communities.

In short, the importance and role in the life of rural and urban communities of iloneles, like other customary leaders, is rather variable. In some places they are among the prominent leaders of the community, but in other communities their role has been downgraded along with that of other local religious leaders. Relations with the Catholic church are variable as well. In general these differences coincide with the kind of pastoral policy the Catholic church is pursuing in the parishes and with the presence or absence of evangelical churches.

3.3.2 *Catechists*

The presence of customary leaders dates back to colonial times or even earlier; catechists have a much more recent origin. They have been

introduced into the local communities in the context of the Catholic restoration since the 1960s.

At present there is a group of catechists organizing church life in almost every community. Unlike customary leaders the catechists are appointed for life on an individual basis. The rotating principle is not applied to them nor do they work as couples. In general there are between five and fifteen male catechists in every community; only in those communities where a women's group meets regularly are there a few female catechists. The role of female catechists in standard Catholic practices such as the celebration of the Word is limited. Moreover, although officially the community is supposed to select those who are to become catechists, in practice the priests or their fellow catechists are the ones who choose and appoint them. As a result, the community has fewer formal means of controlling the catechists than it has of influencing the chinames; an increasingly important role for catechists means a reinforcement of the public role of men.

Usually men who express a personal desire to become catechists are selected and they are generally young. An appointment as catechist by the priest is a source of prestige within the community and as such is a short-cut to local leadership. However, the effects of this prestige should not be overestimated: without the implicit approval of the community a catechist can do nothing.

The catechists told me that among their principal motivations to take on the role was their desire to feel appreciated by the community. They want to play an active role in their community and enjoy the opportunities for going to the parish or even Cobán to participate in courses. Moreover, several of them told me that they felt a vocation at the moment they decided to become a catechist, that they were called by God. Four catechists in Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch said that before becoming catechists they used to drink a lot and their lives were a mess. Becoming a catechist meant making a change in their personal life, stopping drinking, behaving in a proper way, and restoring their family relations.

Regardless of their motivation to become catechists, in all communities they perform *grosso modo* the same activities. The catechists lead the celebration of the Word, advise parents on the significance of the baptism of babies, instruct young people on the value of the First Communion. They also advise young couples on family life, help widows with agricultural work, visit community members who are ill, pray for them and help them in maintaining their households. The content of their sermons to the community reflect quite accurately the instruction they have received in the parish.

In addition to these standard activities and meanings the catechists play a variety of roles. In the Salesian-run parishes there is a strictly defined hierarchical organization with the priest at the top. One catechist is made responsible for each standard activity. So-called instructors lead and train

catechists from several communities in the buildings of the centre. These instructors occupy a higher place in the hierarchy than "ordinary" catechists. They see to it that the other catechists perform their tasks in the communities belonging to the centre, they give sermons in the celebration of the Word and pass on the meanings and contents the priest has imported to them.

The so-called ministros occupy a higher position in the hierarchy of these parishes. There is one ministro in every local community, and they rotate among themselves the performance of tasks in the communities belonging to the centre. They take Holy Communion from the parish to the communities where they administer it to the believers on Sunday. They obtain their training directly from the priest and solve problems in close cooperation with the priest. The ministros decide when instructors have any doubts as to Bible interpretation, inform the priest about what is going on in the villages, choose the persons to become catechists and keep an eye on the catechists. Only official church activities and issues and contents authorized by the priest are allowed. Their control function is underlined by the fact that they work in a community other than their own most of the time. In this way their double loyalty problem - to the priest and to the community they belong to - is solved. The women who lead the women's groups are trained by the religious women, but they are supposed to conform to the guidelines laid down by the ministros.

In practice this hierarchical system in the Salesian-run parishes influences the way the church intervenes in the communities and how it is viewed by the Q'eqchi'es. To begin with, there is no place for deviant opinions in church meetings as one former catechist in Chaabilchoch found out. He had to resign shortly before I spoke to him because the others 'did not accept his words'.

Moreover, in Rubelpec being a Catholic means being a "collaborator of the catechists". The villagers associate Catholicism with the work the catechists do. This association should be viewed in the light of the fact that there are evangelical churches in the village as well; it is a means of social and religious identification. Nevertheless, it indicates that in Rubelpec "ordinary" believers do not believe they have much influence in deciding what is legitimately Catholic; they are inclined to leave that decision to the catechists who depend directly on what the priest tells them. It goes without saying that this hierarchical conception of Catholicism reflects a strong power position on the part of the clergy, and to a lesser extent on the part of the lay specialists.

Catechists, instructors and ministros are not only local church leaders, the Salesians want them to lead the community in all matters. The Salesians involve them in their social projects; this means they have access to the benefits, such as literacy, health care and education. These skills reinforce their position in their communities.

In other parishes responsibilities and relations among the lay leaders are not so clearly formalized and circumscribed as in the case of the Salesian-run parishes. In these parishes there is hardly any differentiation among the catechists. Those who go to the parish to receive instruction and have contact with the priest may vary and there is more room for their own initiatives and decision-making. In their contacts with the communities the priests do not emphasize their authority as much.

In the communities in Salesian-run parishes I was always received by the ministro and instructors who reserved the right at least in the first few visits to virtually monopolize my contacts with the community. In one of these communities the ministro would not even allow other community members to speak to me in public and insisted on accompanying me on my visits to individual households. By contrast, in Xalihá I was introduced to the community by the xb'enil and not by the catechists. Here some of the catechists were even rather shy about talking to me.

In both Samox and Xalihá differences between catechists and other community members are not very clear-cut. In these communities the villagers talk about Catholic activities and the Catholic faith as something the community as such is doing or believing and which is not monopolized by the catechists. The catechists clearly play a leading role, but the things they do are open to discussion in meetings of adult men. In communities in Salesian-run parishes, on the contrary, decisions are made by the ministro leading the catechists.

Those priests who practise liberating pastoral work try to avoid concentration of power and influence in the hands of catechists. For instance, agentes multiplicadores de pastoral social are explicitly recruited among non-catechists and the same holds true in the case of health promoters and literacy orientators. This limitation on the catechists' influence creates room for the community in general and pasawink and chinames in particular to take initiatives.

In practice, the catechists have resisted this positive attitude towards customary religion and the role of pasawink. The majority of these catechists had been trained before this new positive attitude towards customary religion developed in the 1980s. Before that time catechists were told that customary rituals were either irrelevant or blasphemous and relations between catechists and customary leaders were tense.[34] In the late 1970s the parish of Telemán, to which Samox belongs, was led by a Dominican priest who urged catechists to break away from the authority of the chinames and pasawink. He used the new translation of the New Testament into Q'eqchi' to prove that customary rituals had no place in the Bible and were therefore redundant. As a consequence, chinames from various communities banded together and once even threatened to kill the priest.

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[34]. The conflict between catechists and customary leaders at the beginning of the 1970s has been well documented by Cabarrús 1979: 120-128.

Since the new positive attitude towards customary religion developed many catechists have found it hard to follow this change in pastoral policy. Now there is a further structure legitimized by the parish, the pasawink council, which has eroded their exclusive parish-promoted authority. In the parish of Poptún the pasawink are even encouraged by the priest to take over tasks that used to form part of the catechists' standard repertoire such as deciding on who should receive First Communion, giving talks during the celebration of the Word, and advising young couples who are going to be married. As a result, the priests' effort to restore the authority of the pasawink is sometimes resisted by their catechists. On the other hand, especially in the town of Cobán there are catechists who sometimes take a more radical stance in favour of customary practices and meanings than the clergy themselves do, but it is the clergy's explicit policy there to stimulate the catechists to take their own initiatives.[35]

Nevertheless, in parishes run by priests who apply the concept of liberating pastoral work relations between chinames, pasawink and catechists have relaxed. A I saw in both Samox and Xalihá they cooperate closely with each other in both parish-promoted and customary rituals. Chinames, pasawink and catechists invite each other to become one another's *compadres*[36] and catechists also serve as chinames.

The catechists are generally able to make the "ordinary believers" participate in their activities, but in the areas that suffered from massive violence the catechists have a difficult job in this respect. In these areas they are confronted with the destruction of community structures, sometimes the pasawink reject the role of catechists and in some communities the catechists are strictly controlled by the civil patrols. Violence and ideological struggle have had negative consequences for the parish in general and the catechists in particular.

3.3.3 *Evangelical leaders*

In more than half the local Q'eqchi' communities local evangelical leaders have become part and parcel of religious life. In the communities I studied none of the evangelical churches had a permanent minister. The church in Chaabilchoch is visited by a minister every two weeks and once in a while ministers from other towns visit the church. In the absence of a regular minister two or three members of the church lead the services. The regular

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[35]. It goes much too far to say that these catechists have become independent from the institutional hierarchy, as Wilson does (Wilson 1995: 303). In general, catechists remain quite obedient to the clergy in ecclesiastical meetings and only reluctantly develop activities outside of the framework of the church. Consequently, it is not appropriate to talk about a "movement" of catechists in this respect.

[36]. Parents and godfathers of a child call each other *compadres*.

minister preaches in Spanish and Q'eqchi' and emphasizes the importance of the Bible and the need to behave according to God's will.

The Asamblea de Dios church in Rubelpec welcomes a priest from Carchá every few weeks and a so-called "worker" every week. The Nazarene church in the neighbouring community is visited by a minister from Cobán every Sunday, but their meetings and services on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are led by lay leaders who have participated in the church for a long time. None of these local leaders has received any leadership training. The only "condition" is that they should be able to read Bible texts and explain them, but no one supervises them on the correctness of their explanations.

The answers the respondents of these churches gave to my question referring to the influence of external and local leaders on their local churches suggest that this influence is in fact very limited. Referring to ministers and lay leaders from elsewhere a member of the Nazarene church said: 'There is no need for anyone to come from far away to lead our services'. A member of the Chaabilchoch Iglesia de la Nueva Jeruzalén stressed that there is no central guiding person at all in their church and said: 'There is no guide who leads[37] us. Each individual member tries to follow the Word of God and we just organize ourselves in the church'. The members of this church stressed that it does not make much difference to their meetings whether a minister is present or not. It is said that there is more emphasis on Bible study when he is there, but the respondents do not consider this to be a major difference. Only one respondent, a member of the Asamblea de Dios in Rubelpec, told me: 'Without those who come from Carchá we cannot do much', but he added that they have several weekly meetings in their church at which they do not need any leader at all. I did not come across such expressions of autonomy vis-à-vis external and local religious specialists among Catholics.

3.4 Competing religious specialists

Almost all the local communities have pasawink, chinames, and catechists, while in the majority of communities several evangelical leaders can also be found. The relations between religious specialists are quite variable and will be discussed in this section.

As we saw above, before the first half of the 1980s the catechists were trained to play a leading role in their communities at the cost of the influence of chinames and pasawink. Since then, in the parishes where the concept of liberating pastoral work is applied the catechists, chinames and pasawink work closely together in the performance of both parish-promoted

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[37]. My translator used the Spanish word *manda*, which has a meaning somewhere in between "leading" and "commanding".

and customary practices. By contrast, as was outlined above, parishes in which a sacramentalist pastoral policy is applied, there is much more continuity with the situation prior to the 1980s. There the pasawink and chinames are either incorporated into regular parish-promoted practices or they are marginalized.

In parishes in which neither a clearly liberating nor an overtly sacramentalist policy is pursued, the priests, religious women and other spokespeople gave me the impression that in "their" communities there are no open conflicts between customary leaders and catechists; they all go their own way in encouraging customary and parish promoted activities without interfering with one another.

Nevertheless, the differences between priests, catechists and customary leaders should not be exaggerated. In the evangelicals' view in both Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch the Catholic faith and customary leaders and practices go together. Relations between evangelical leaders on the one hand and catechists and customary leaders on the other are usually delicate.

The Catholic church and the evangelical churches regard each other as clear competitors in the religious field. As was outlined above, relations used to be openly conflictual, especially in the years of massive violence. Since then relations have improved and the times when evangelical ministers denounced priests and priests accused evangelical leaders of being collaborators in bloodshed are over. In general, ministers and priests ignore each other, but do their utmost to keep believers from passing over to a competitor.

In the villages I worked in there are examples of both open conflict and cooperation. The one evangelical household in the community of Samox has a hard time. The man tries not to offend the Catholics, he even helped to build the Catholic church, but his fellow villagers do not appreciate him. He has land titles to ten *manzanas*[38], but the local committee that deals with land issues only gave him five. Five years ago he was still participating in the civil control committee but rumours spread that he had amassed 1,500 quetzales at the expense of the villagers. They threw him out of the committee. His fellow villagers are no longer prepared to help him plant his maize.

By contrast, travelling to the community of Samox I always passed through a neighbouring village whose minority of Nazarenos were just building a new church and they knew I had good connections with the Catholic church. Once they stopped me and asked whether the bishop would be able and willing to send them corrugated iron sheets for the roof of their church. Apparently, ecclesiastical divisions were not very fundamental to their way of thinking.

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[38]. A manzana equals 6987.2 square metres.

The general impression is one of peaceful relations between catechists and evangelical leaders, but strong potential for conflict remains. The communities of Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch reflect this. Both Catholics and evangelicals in these communities told me that their relations with one another are good and that they want to stay at peace. An important expression of these peaceful relations is the fact that Catholics and evangelicals plant their maize in mixed groups of Catholics and evangelicals (see next chapter). An evangelical respondent in Rubelpec told me that this mixed planting started recently; before that Catholics and evangelicals planted separately.

Nevertheless, latent conflicts abound. The evangelicals criticize the Catholics for their drinking, dancing and moral deficiencies and for worshipping saints and natural phenomena. Interestingly, this is the same critique that the Salesians utter towards customary leaders which points to a degree of coincidence between the evangelical and the Salesian discourse. In addition, leaders of both the Catholic and evangelical churches are very wary of efforts to convert each other's believers. In Chaabilchoch the evangelicals complain that the Catholics never come to their meetings in spite of invitations, but the Catholics regard these invitations as efforts to convert them. The evangelicals offered to help the Catholics to build their church if they would help them to construct theirs. The Catholics turned down the invitation.

The case of one of the school teachers in Rubelpec is instructive. According to one of the Catholics a new school teacher started to work in the village two years ago. She turned out to be evangelical and - again according to this Catholic - began to preach to the children. The parents went to the municipality and some civil servant wrote a letter to the ministry of education. The ministry in turn addressed the teacher and urged her to leave, which is what she did.

The above-noted coincidence between the evangelical and Salesian discourses shows that the competition between the various churches is not only focused on differences in discourse. Part of this competition can be explained simply in terms of interests. Indeed, the pastoral policy the Salesians are implementing shares some important traits with Pentecostalism. The delegitimization of customary practices and representations, the Bible-centred character of their discourse, and the central idea that salvation can be achieved by observing individual moral standards and by loyalty to the church catch the eye. The struggle against the consumption of alcohol, the erosion of the social and religious role of pasawink, the stimulus to improve economic performance, and the promotion of the church as the central focus of identity also come to the fore. Of course, there are important differences such as the role of the sacraments, the central authority of the priests, and the central role played by social projects in Salesian policy; but the similarities are striking. The

clearest contrast to Pentecostalism within the religious field is represented by liberating pastoral work.

I have not come across examples of conflicts or tensions among leaders of the various evangelical churches.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELIGIOUS FIELD:

PRACTICES AND MEANINGS OF THE Q'EQCHI'ES

4.1 Introduction

The influence exercised by religious specialists on the Q'eqchi'es is an indispensable part of Q'eqchi' religion, but the core of this study has to focus on the religious practices and meanings of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es themselves. These practices and meanings are the subject of this chapter.

When thinking about this subject, two central questions may immediately come to the reader's mind. First, is it at all possible to make an analysis of the religious practices and meanings of so many (600,000) Q'eqchi'es? Secondly, is it possible to overcome the problem that the data collected during two years' fieldwork may only provide a haphazard and random picture of a given moment? Concerning the first question, when collecting the data referring to religious practices and meanings of the Q'eqchi'es, I followed the same method as the one which yielded the material for the previous two chapters. I have asked questions concerning the religious practices and meanings of the Q'eqchi'es to respondents who have a regional overview, and I have focused on these practices and meanings in the local communities which I studied in detail. On the basis of this material I can only discuss the most important religious practices and representations, allowing for their common denominators as well as their main variations. Of course, it is impossible to go into the details of the rich diversity of rituals and meanings of every individual Q'eqchi' and Q'eqchi' community.

Concerning the second question, to some extent this analysis does indeed reflect the practices and related meanings at a certain moment and such an analysis cannot fully take into account the fact that religion is an ongoing process of construction of meanings and performance of practices. Many respondents emphasized that important changes have taken place in the last decade, but it has not always been possible to draw a reliable picture of these changes. For example many pasawink have been complaining about a supposed loss of customary rituals and meanings, especially among the youth. However we may ask whether these complaints represent an actual situation or whether they reflect the responsibility which the pasawink feel for guaranteeing the continuity of customary religion. Referring to specific customary rituals, most of the respondents in the

individual households did not confirm these complaints. In Salesian-run parishes several respondents told me that many customs have been lost, but it was not clear whether they were referring to customs in general or to the vices which the Salesians associate with customs such as drinking and quarrelling. Moreover Catholic respondents tend to stress these changes because evangelicals frequently criticize them for committing these vices. Neither does the existing literature, such as the study by Carlos Rafael Cabarrús[1] in the early 1970s serve to construct a view of the historical development of Q'eqchi' religion. Comparisons with my own material on specific practices and meanings are inappropriate.

Nevertheless, I have tried to go beyond depicting religious rituals captured at very specific moments and to concentrate on the basic elements that return over the years, leaving aside coincidental details. I asked my respondents not only how they performed a specific ritual that particular year but how they practice it in general, what they did last year and the year before and so on. Concerning the rituals in which I participated, I asked them similar questions, and incidental elements of these rituals are not included in the following accounts. Thus I was able, at least to a certain extent, to present a more "stable" treatment of the religious practices, and reliable information on changes of meanings and practices has been incorporated into my analysis. This information needs to refer to very specific elements of practices in which the respondents preferably participate themselves and are confirmed by several respondents.

This chapter begins with an emphasis on practices. The most salient religious practices performed by the Q'eqchi'es and the meanings related to these practices will be analyzed in the first section. In the next section these meanings will be brought together to detect the common denominators as well as the main variations within the religious discourse of the Q'eqchi'es. In the next chapter these denominators and variations will be related to the central research questions.

4.2 Q'eqchi' religious practices

These religious practices will be presented according to their source: those that have their origin in customary religion, those promoted by the parish at present, and those that are stimulated by the evangelical churches. These categories are not unequivocal nor are they mutually exclusive. Practices which may be promoted in one parish may not be stimulated in another. Many customary practices have their origin in past Catholic practices and many customary practices are actually promoted by parishes which apply a liberating concept of pastoral work.

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[1]. Cabarrús 1979.

Moreover, most of the Q'eqchi'es use practices and meanings from these three sources as "inputs" into their meaning-making process and their performance of religious practices. Within this process, these meanings and practices do not stay the same and one of the questions to be raised in this chapter is precisely to what extent "ordinary" religious meaning-makers combine and redefine practices and meanings from different sources in their own rituals and discourses. However to do so the different sources must first be distinguished.

4.2.1 *Customary practices*

The first category of practices that will be outlined are customary ones. In the various communities and households which I studied, I came across a wide range of customary practices. The most eye-catching ones are: the feast of the patron saint, the *mayejak*, the planting rituals, the *b'antioxink* and the *wa'tesink re li kab'l*.

The feast of the patron saint

The patron saint's feast is a classical example of a practice that has its origin in Catholic colonialism but was incorporated into customary religion. It no longer belongs to standard practices promoted by the Catholic church. Only priests who apply the concept of liberating pastoral work show a positive interest in the observance of this feast.

Usually a community has one or several saints after which it is named. Since these saints have their own days on the calendar, one or several days are celebrated each year to honour them. In an urban context there is usually one patron saint for the whole town plus one for every neighbourhood. Chinames are the ones who organize these feasts in rural communities, while the cofradías do the same in the towns.

One of the most elaborate celebrations of this feast I have come across took place in Xalihá on January 13 and 14, 1992. The priest told me that he visits the community on those days if possible. He arrived on the afternoon of the 13th and was received by the xb'enil man who offered him cocoa with kernels of maize. In the meantime other chinam men slaughtered a few pigs, the roxil's contribution to the feast, while the chinam women were busy preparing the food for the evening.

After a few hours all the villagers came together in the church. During the ensuing Mass the priest emphasized the main elements of parish discourse. After the Mass the emphasis shifted towards customary religion and the pasawink men took the lead. Both the men and the women gathered in front of the church on a little meadow lit by the moon. The pasawink put four large candles in a square on the meadow and a large piece of copal pom in the centre. Then the candles and the copal pom were lit. Several villagers explained to me that the square of four candles represented the

four corners of the universe while the copal pom stood for the villagers in the centre of the universe offering their sacrifice to everyone within this it.

The universe and the sacrifice to its "inhabitants" appeared as the central aspects of this part of the celebration which is called *yo'lek*. The word yo'lek has two meanings. Literally it means to keep vigil, but the term is used specifically to refer to this particular ceremony. The affinity between these two meanings lies in the fact that this ceremony is generally practised at night and that during a vigil, the villagers are meant to think of all those who reside in the universe.

The yo'lek started when the pasawink began to say the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary. All joined in and repeated these several times out loud. After these prayers had faded away the central part of the yo'lek started. Both the men and the women began saying their prayers out loud in an uncoordinated way. They expressed their worries, such as the fear of poor crops for example, and mentioned all the important "persons" in their universe. After a while only one of the leading pasawink, *Qawa' Bex*, stayed on and addressed the universe in name of the community. He mentioned the names of God, Santa María, the sun, the moon, the rain, the wind, the thirteen central mountains in the Q'eqchi' region, the surrounding mountains and villages, the saints, the Lord of Esquipulas (their patron saint), several other saints, the men and the women, the pasawink and pasaixq of the community, the children, the houses, the crops, the trees, the animals, the priests, the religious women, Cahabón (the place of origin of many of the villagers), the bishop, the pope and the ancestors. He addressed these "persons" again and again in a random sequence.

To the villagers, mentioning the name of a person means addressing this person to create an understanding with him or her. What happens at this yo'lek should be seen, then, as an effort to create a harmonious relationship with all in the universe.

After mentioning their names, the pasawink indicated the good things that everyone in the universe was doing. He asked for forgiveness for cutting down some trees, for a good harvest and protection against all sorts of problems and appealed to those in the universe to keep the animals from eating too much of their crops. Qawa' Bex was talking about vital and practical aspects of the life of the villagers.

The yo'lek was wound up with some Lord's Prayers and Hail Marys. At midnight they all got together in a long building next to the church where there was marimba music indicating party time. Meanwhile, for those who wanted to go on in a more contemplative manner there was harp and violin music in the church. When the food was ready the xb'enil invited everyone to have dinner. There was chatting and laughing and after dinner, they all joined in and started to dance to marimba music, men and women in separate parts of the building.

In the early morning, a procession left the church headed by the pasawink carrying a cross and some candles and accompanied by

tambourine and chirimía music; it ended up in the house of Qawa' Bex. There he thanked everyone for joining in, again mentioned the main "persons" dwelling in the universe and stressed the importance of all the customary rituals which he considered as gifts from God.

The next day another procession carried the cross from Qawa' Bex's house back to the church. During the Mass that followed a few couples were married and the so-called "replacement of chinames" took place. The departing chinames presented the new ones to the community and handed over the image of Santa María. Then the women chinames entered the church and placed incense, food and flowers on the altar symbolizing their task which is to take care of the church. Now the men buried a little meat and cocoa in the ground, burned candles and copal pom and a short yo'lek took place on the meadow. So much for this particular feast in Xalihá.

In Samox there are two saints' days, one coinciding with Christmas and dedicated to San José and Santa María, and another held on the Friday before Palm Sunday and during the Holy Week, celebrated in honour of *Jesús Nazareno*. Both feasts have their own line of chinames and are performed using the same ingredients as for the feast of Xalihá. In addition, some of the pasawink go to a nearby mountain to sacrifice candles, copal pom and chicken meat to this mountain as well as to have a yo'lek.

At a yo'lek during a patron saint's feast in Samox and Xalihá, many "persons" are addressed, especially their saints. The community of Xalihá is dedicated to the *Señor de Esquipulas*, the Black Christ of Esquipulas. Christ is supposed to have appeared with a black skin at Esquipulas, now a famous place of pilgrimage in the Guatemalan department of Chiquimula. In 1953 church leaders and conservative politicians organized a tour of his statue. It was carried to every corner in the country in order to reinforce Catholic faith and to mobilize the people against the supposedly communist regime of Jácobo Arbenz Guzmán.[2]

The villagers are unaware of what happened in Esquipulas not of the political manipulations involved. They know that "their saint" is an important one; they situate him in a prominent place in their universe so he must be an excellent saint to serve as their patron saint. They hardly refer to Christ since to them, the Señor de Esquipulas is just another saint, albeit an important one.

The Señor de Esquipulas is a clear example of the villagers attaching to a symbol meanings which are different from its "official" version. To the villagers the most important meaning attributed to the saint is that he stands for the unity and well-being of the community. The community cannot live or exist without him. In the words of some respondents:

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[2]. Richard, Meléndez 1982: 198.

> 'The saint helps us unite the community. The saint is like a person who unites all of us. We do not want to think about what might happen to us if we did not celebrate his feast... Not celebrating his feast is as if there were no people in the community.'

The patron saint symbolizing the unity of the community is a common phenomenon among the Q'eqchi'es, not only the villagers of Xalihá. Moreover many respondents in Rubelpec told me that San Esteban, their patron saint, is an active person who keeps them all together.

In both Xalihá and Samox, almost all the villagers participate in these feasts. In Rubelpec the feast has changed considerably in recent years. It used to last several days with much music and dancing, and many respondents told me it would end in fighting, drunkenness and many other things forbidden by God. In recent years the priest has been celebrating a Mass on San Esteban's day, the first of November, and afterwards all but the chinames go home. Only the chinames have a meal together. There is a procession from the house of the departing xb'eniles to the house of the new ones carrying the statues of San Antonio, San José and the Heart of Jesus. San Esteban stays in the church because he 'is like a mayor who directs the other saints', as one chinam told me. The chinames pray before the saints. Some of them told me: 'We are their children', and added that they ask the saints for protection, thereby expressing their faith in the personal power of the saints. However, they went on to say that the saints should be seen as images only and that they are actually praying to God. It appeared to me that they were adding this to defend themselves against evangelicals criticising them for seeing the saints as gods, and certainly the priest would not be very pleased to see them praying to saints as living "persons".

Nevertheless the feast of San Esteban in Rubelpec does not have the same significance as the patron saints' feasts in Xalihá and Samox. It is not complemented by customary practices such as the yo'lek or the mayejak and almost all but the chinames and mertomes participate only in the Mass. They are not very interested in the feast and the evangelicals do not bother about San Esteban at all.

Rubelpec is not the only community within the Carchá area in which the patron saint's feast is losing its importance. Several respondents told me that in the communities of this area the feast used to be celebrated for five or six days, with the chinames and pasawink playing a central role, praying in latin in front of the community, 'changing the flowers' and performing a yo'lek and mayejak. There used to be much dancing and music and the community members would abstain from sexual intercourse for several days before the feast in order to prepare themselves. Nowadays in the Carchá area, the celebration of the Word and the Mass have taken its place. The common meal continues, but the rest has disappeared.

Carchá illustrates the situation of all the parishes run by the Salesians where the feast has almost faded away. The patron saint of Chaabilchoch, Santa María, has her day on the tenth of May, but it does not arouse much enthusiasm among the villagers. Only a few gather together but nothing special is done. The only place in the Carchá area where the patron saints' feast is outside the control of the clergy is the town itself.

Mayejak

The idea of the patron saint has its origin in Catholic colonialism whereas the central "persons" that are addressed in the customary rituals that will be presented next have a much more indigenous source. These rituals mainly focus on the mountain and the valley where the community is situated, which provide the community with their crops, their animals, their health, in other words with the essential things they need to survive. In order to secure these things they have to address this *Tzuultaq'a* (*Tzuul* means 'mountain' in the Q'eqchi' language and *Taq'a* is their word for 'valley') through a variety of rituals, one of which is called mayejak.

The word 'mayejak' has several meanings. Literally it means 'to sacrifice', and the term is used, for example, when a man sacrifices copal pom, candles and meat just before planting his maize. In its specific use it refers to a ritual performed by the community just before the land is cleared. This usually takes place in March and April at the start of the main maize cycle. The pasawink of a community may decide to perform more mayejaks, for instance at the beginning of the second maize cycle, if the community has two crops each year, or in the course of the maize cycle when a flood or a drought threatens the crops. These "intermediary" mayejaks follow the same sequence as the most important one which is performed in March or April and will be outlined here.

In Xalihá and Samox the mayejak is celebrated in a very comprehensive way. In February the chinames and pasawink decide on the dates when the rituals will be performed. They start to collect money - ten to twenty quetzales[3] from each household in Samox - to buy the necessary copal pom, candles, turkeys, cocoa, fireworks, and food and divide the tasks to be fulfilled during the ceremonies. In Samox prayers are said for novena during the nine days preceding the mayejak.

In Samox the 1991 mayejak started with a celebration of the Word in the afternoon. The things that were to be sacrificed such as the copal pom, the candles, the cocoa, the meat and the tortillas, were placed on the altar. The chinam women circled the church building three times while they sang and played the guitar and the tambor. In the evening the male chinames placed candles on a cross then burned copal pom and all the villagers lit a

[3]. At the time of fieldwork the US dollar equalled five quetzales.

candle. Then the first chinam turned towards the north and started praying; the second chinam joined in the prayer and turned south, the third chinam did the same while turning east and the fourth turned westwards. After that, one of the pasawink continued to pray out loud in the name of the community.

The chinames told me that the four winds referred to the entire universe and to the land in particular: the land related to the Tzuultaq'a, their direct source of food and life to which the ceremony was directed. The pasawink, who continued to pray, addressed all those who are important in the universe in much the same way as the yo'lek in Xalihá: those present, visitors, the animals and crops belonging to the villagers, the houses, nearby villages, the priests, the religious women, the bishop, the pope, God, Christ, several saints, the sun, the moon, the wind, the rain, and the important mountains. As to the Tzuultaq'a, he first addressed some important and more distant mountains such as *San Pablo Xucaneb'* close to San Juan Chamelco, *Qawa' Siyab'* and *Qana' Itzam* close to Cahabón, a mountain called *Rincón* (which is situated close to Salamá, so outside of the Q'eqchi' region), *Qawa' Kojaj* close to Cojaj and others (see Map 2). Then nearby mountains were mentioned such as *Chajkoj, Chib'itz, San Pablo Xaliha, Qawa' Raxon Tzunqin, Jolom Chakaw* and others. The pasawink thanked all these "persons", especially God and the mountains, for all the good things they provided to the villagers in the preceding year. Then he asked for a good harvest for this year, that their crops and animals may grow well, that insects and worms will not eat all the crops. He asked for protection, that nothing may happen to them and their children, that they, the visitors and neighbouring villages may live in peace. It would seem that all these things depend on God and the mountains.

The meeting was concluded by a meal served to everyone for and prepared by the chinam women. The male chinames told about the things they had bought with the money they had collected earlier. After this ceremony a group of eight male pasawink gathered the things that were on the altar and, in groups of two, walked to nearby mountains to the north, the south, the west and the east. A similar ceremony was performed on each of these mountains and the pom, candles, cocoa and turkey meat were sacrificed to the mountain. They 'sowed' these things; they put the turkey and cocoa in the ground, thus into the skin of the Tzuultaq'a.

At the same time representatives of the community, both men and women, joined those from other communities in Telemán and went to some of the central mountains such as San Pablo Xucaneb', the Calvary in Cobán and *Chi Ixim* in Tactic to perform the same sacrifice ceremony. Sometimes they also go to Esquipulas. On their return they were received by the other community members. So much for this specific mayejak in Samox.

In Xalihá the mayejak has the same three basic elements: first there is a meeting of the whole community, then some pasawink go to nearby Tzuultaq'as, and finally a representative of the community goes to several of

the central Q'eqchi' mountains. Only in recent years have the villagers started to come together to say farewell and to wait for the pasawink who go to a nearby or central Tzuultaq'as. In the past, the pasawink practised the mayejak on behalf of the community though without the villagers getting together. Now there is more participation.

Two of the leading pasawink in Xalihá visit a special cave in the nearby mountain of *Santa María Semococh* to perform their mayejak. They leave outside all objects made of materials that do not have their origin in their own life-world such as combs, hats and mirrors. Meanwhile Qawa' Bex, representing the community, joins the pasawink from other communities before leaving for the yearly pilgrimage to Cahabón and the sacred mountains Qana' Itzam and Qawa' Siyab'.

This pilgrimage is not only an element of their mayejak, it is also a way of confirming their roots in the Cahabón area from which they migrated a few decades ago. The priests of several parishes in the settlement areas of El Petén and Izabal told me that the same holds true of the pasawink from their areas who go to the central mountains of Calvary Cobán, Kojaj, San Pablo Xucaneb', or Chi Ixim. It restates their relations with their places of origin. In the settlement areas the pasawink do not visit nearby mountains because there are none in these areas. Instead, they visit caves which represent the sacred landscape to them. In Poptún the priest took the initiative to visit the Maya ruins in Tikal.

At the mayejak rituals in Xalihá and Samox, the pasawink primarily address the Tzuultaq'a. In the words of one of the Xalihá villagers: 'The mayejak is directed towards the mountain while the celebration of the Word is especially addressed to God'. They do not leave out God or other "persons" such as the sun, the rain, the wind and the moon. Qawa' Bex told me that when he visits the mountain Qana' Itzam, a sudden wind sometimes rises: 'It is God announcing that He is also there and asking for attention'. However the mayejak's principal aim is to confirm their relations with the Tzuultaq'a. In Xalihá and Samox it is the community which presents itself to the Tzuultaq'a. The leading pasawink represent the community and all but a few households participate.

Similar community style mayejak rituals used to be performed in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, but significant changes have taken place in these communities. In recent years there is a group of eight to ten men in Chaabilchoch who go to sacred mountains in Tactic, Cobán and Cojaj in April once every few years to do their mayejak much as the pasawink of Samox do. Nevertheless the other villagers no longer contribute to cover the expenses, the same group does not visit nearby mountains, and there is no meeting attended by everyone nor a yo'lek in the village. Only a few individual villagers still go to nearby mountains and offer flowers and sacrifice.

Here the mayejak is no longer community practice; it has become a matter of individual initiative. The others do not feel represented by those

who go to Cojaj and Cobán, most of them even indicated they do not even know that there is a group going there at all. An old lady told me that she goes to a nearby mountain to burn candles but others criticize and even accuse her of being a witch.

Needless to say that knowing the present state of the mayejak rituals during the month of April, I was very surprised to hear that all except the evangelicals had gathered the year before during a period of drought to perform a mayejak ritual along the river to ask for rain.[4] The drought was sufficient reason to at least temporarily reactivate this customary practice.

In Rubelpec the mayejak had a similar fate. Several respondents associated the loss of the community mayejak to evangelization, the Word of God and the influence of the priest. In their eyes God and the priests are opposed to the performance of the mayejak: 'The pasawink used to tell us that we have to ask the mountains to bless the harvest, but with evangelization all this has changed. There is only one living God.' 'The priest says the mayejak is of no use.'

Nevertheless, there are some practices in Rubelpec that substitute for the community mayejak. First of all in April, most of the Catholics go in pairs to visit several of the central mountains such as Calvary Cobán and Tactic. There, they perform the same practices as the pasawink of other communities and ask for the same things. Secondly before they clear the land, the Catholics pray individually, burn copal pom and candles and put a cross on the land. They ask for the usual things: for permission to cultivate the land, that no accidents should occur, for protection against snake-bites, for a good harvest, health, food, and enough rain and sun. The evangelicals do the same except for the copal pom, the candles and the cross. One of them told me: 'We do not know how many years God dedicated to letting this tree grow, so we have to ask His permission before cutting it down'.

In short, in Rubelpec there is some level of continuity with the past. Almost all the villagers feel the need to pay ritual attention to the clearing of the land. They do so individually on their own land; the Catholics visit central mountains and do the things that are associated with a mayejak, and all ask for the same things as in a mayejak. Moreover two thirds of the respondents address both the Tzuultaq'a and God on these occasions while only one third of them only address God. For most of the respondents the Tzuultaq'a remains an important "person" who refers to customary meanings. The evangelicals only address God but pay ritual attention to these moments, and they ask of Him the same things which pasawink would request from the Tzuultaq'a.

The main difference with a mayejak ritual is that almost all of them ignore the nearby mountains - the only Tzuultaq'as they address are the central ones - and that the villagers perform these practices individually. In

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[4]. The quote at the beginning of Chapter Three refers to this occasion.

the words of one of the villagers: 'We cannot do this as a group because not all of us agree to do so.'

Another practice which substitutes for the mayejak in Rubelpec is the fact that Catholics offer money, fruit, maize and other crops to the church at Christmas and after the Holy Week. They send these to the health clinic of the religious women in Tzunutz or to the church in Carchá. The members of the Asamblea de Dios church do the same during one of the visits of their pastor. All give thanks to God for these things and ask for more good harvests. This might be a continuation of all sorts of contributions which the indian communities were supposed to make to the Catholic church since colonial times[5] and of the tithes which the evangelicals are supposed to pay to their churches, but the fact that they use the term mayejak for there gifts points to a practice which is substituting for the customary mayejak. Instead of addressing and sacrificing to the Tzuultaq'a and asking for permission, good harvest and protection, they sacrifice to the church, address God but ask for the same things.

From my data referring to the mayejak the same picture emerges as from my data regarding the patron saint's feast: in most of the parishes these rituals are performed in a comprehensive way as outlined in the cases of Xalihá and Samox. The priest of the parish of Lancetillo told me that in his parish a revival of mayejak rituals is even taking place. The places where the mayejak has lost much of its communitarian character are mainly situated in the Salesian-run parishes and in the areas that suffered most from violence. The mayejak is not generally celebrated in these areas due to the destruction of community structures, the loss of many pasawink[6] and the atmosphere of suspicion within communities.[7] However, the examples of Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec show that in the absence of a community mayejak, both Catholics and evangelicals may work out substitution practices that show a significant level of continuity, both in practice and meanings, with the community mayejak. In both communities even catechists assist in these practices.

Planting rituals

Once the land has been cleared and prepared, the maize can be planted. This is the second moment in the maize cycle to which the Q'eqchi'es pay ritual attention. In the villages which I studied in detail only seven respondents told me that they pay no attention to this moment. All the priests and catechists I have spoken with confirmed that in their parishes,

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[5]. See Van Oss 1986: 79-108.

[6]. CEIDEC 1990: 170.

[7]. Again, Wilson's assertion that few villages collectively celebrate the mayejak (Wilson 1995: 68) reflects the data he gathered among the communities that have suffered from massive violence and do not allow any generalized conclusion.

planting rituals are performed by all. They are performed at the household level, which coincides with the fact that most of the land in the communities has been allocated to individual households. The maize is planted and planting rituals are performed at the end of May, *i.e.* at the end of the dry season and just before the first rain falls.

Planting rituals show a remarkable uniformity all over the Q'eqchi' region. They start with a preparation period of several weeks. The male pasawink used to indicate to the various households the special days on which the maize had to be planted. Now the men of the community simply decide among themselves whose maize is going to be planted on which day. During this preparation period the man of the household selects the seed to be planted and the woman prepares the food. Some visit the church and put some maize cobs on the altar. The man slaughters a turkey, part of which is to serve as food, while the rest is to be sacrificed. Some slaughter a chicken but in fact, chickens are not accepted as a sacrifice because they do not originally belong to the natural surroundings of the villagers. Chickens are alien to the surroundings but the villagers turn to a practical solution when there is no turkey available.

The couple abstains from sexual intercourse for several days or weeks. The Q'eqchi'es consider the planting of maize as something similar to sexual intercourse. Planting means inserting one's seed in the earth, which is considered to be female. Consequently only men are allowed to plant, and having sex during the preparation period would mean adultery. Both sexual intercourse and planting precede the creation of life and refer to fertility. The women heads of household do all kinds of agricultural labour except the planting. They call in a son, a brother or a neighbour to do if.

The night before the actual planting takes place the man puts the seed on the altar of the house. He burns candles and copal pom, keeps vigil during part of the night and prays. Most of the respondents told me that they put cocoa and some blood from the turkey or part of its meat on the seed. Some get together at this night to pray and keep vigil together and even organize some music, but in general the man of the household performs these practices on his own.

In the early morning, the man goes to the plot of land where the maize is to be planted. He puts candles in a square which symbolizes the universe and the land and he burns copal pom in the centre as a sacrifice. He prays and plants the first seeds. Most of the respondents put a cross on the land and bury a piece of meat, turkey soup, cocoa or the water they used to wash the turkey.

After that, the man returns to his house where about fifteen relatives, compadres, friends and neighbours are waiting. They pray together; the man takes the group to the plot of land and together they proceed with the planting. They stand in a row, each carrying a stick and a bag of seeds. The row moves slowly forward, the men use the sticks to make holes and put some seeds in every hole. Once the planting is over, they return to the

man's house where, assisted by neighbouring women, the woman of the household is waiting for them to have lunch. The next day, the man joins the group which is going to plant the land of another household.

In Xalihá and Samox almost all the villagers consider the planting rituals to be indispensable for a good harvest. The meanings they attach to the planting rituals are similar to those of the mayejak. The villagers address several "persons" including God, the Tzuultaq'a, the saints, the sun, the moon, the rain, the wind and the saints. The local mountains as well as some of the thirteen central Tzuultaq'as receive special attention. The copal pom and candles which they burn and the cocoa and meat they put in the ground are sacrificed to them. The villagers request permission to cultivate the land, ask for protection against illness, accidents and snake-bites, plead for an abundant crop and ask the animals not to eat too much of the crop.

In Samox and Xalihá there are more parallels between the planting rituals and the mayejak. The man who addresses the Tzuultaq'a during his prayers the night before the planting and on his land in the early morning, represents the community much as the pasawink represent the community during their mayejaks at nearby or central mountains. This idea of representation is reflected in the group-wise planting of maize; it cannot be done individually.

Most Q'eqchi'es, such as the villagers of Samox and Xalihá, attach a very special symbolic importance to maize. They consider maize to be their 'seed of life', imbued with a spirit stemming from the Tzuultaq'a. In the words of some of the Q'eqchi'es from Cahabón: 'Maize is alive, it is people'. As a result, during the planting rituals it is not only the Tzuultaq'a as the source of maize who has to be addressed but also the maize itself. The attention which the man and the others devote to the seed and the blood, the cocoa and meat he puts on the seed the night before the planting, are ways of reactivating the life of the spirit of the maize to make it grow well and fast. The joyful atmosphere during the group-wise planting serves the same purpose. The cross which many villagers place on the land symbolizes the spirit of maize: 'The god of the good harvest', as a Xalihá villager said. Others also relate the cross to Christ's death while some understand the cross as a symbol of their universe and their land. We have here an interesting example of a symbol having both customary and official Catholic meanings.

Among the Catholics of Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec there is difference of opinion concerning the importance of the planting rituals. However in the eyes of a large majority of Catholic respondents, their food and daily subsistence depend heavily on whether or not they perform these rituals. This majority actually perform more or less the same planting rituals as the villagers of Samox and Xalihá.

However a variety of views exists in both Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec about specific elements of these rituals and the meanings attached to them. Here only half of the Catholic respondents put blood on the seed and place

a cross on the land. Those who do so attribute to these practices the same meanings as the villagers of Xalihá and Samox. Others said they just ask God to bless the seed when they keep vigil, reject the practice of putting blood on the seed and place a cross on the land only because Christ died on a cross. Nevertheless, in Rubelpec everyone believes that maize has a spirit.

There is discord about the sacrifice of meat as well. Half of the Catholic respondents in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec reject this practice while others said explicitly that they do offer this sacrifice. One man in Rubelpec told me:

> 'We have to feed the mountains otherwise strange things will happen. Once, one of my mother's pigs disappeared. She had a dream and saw an elderly lady who told her that she had her pig and that my mother would have to give her some tortillas. When she woke up she burned some candles and pom, prayed and the pig returned.'

These differences are closely linked to the question of to whom the villagers address themselves when they pray during their planting rituals. In these two communities a large majority address both God and the Tzuultaq'a, but a considerable minority pray only to God. In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, God appears as the one whom they ask for the things they need such as protection, permission to cultivate and a good harvest. Only a few actually know the names of the nearby Tzuultaq'as or address them; the mountains they pray to are mainly among the central Tzuultaq'as. Almost all mention the rain, the wind, the sun and the moon in their prayers, but some address them as "persons" while others only ask God and the Tzuultaq'a to send them enough rain, sun and wind for their crops to grow well.

All the evangelicals in both villages pay ritual attention to the planting of their maize. They hold a service attended by all their fellow church members in their house or in the local church the night before the planting. If the service is held in the house, they put their seed on the table (they do not have an altar), keep vigil and pray, and some burn candles. No one puts meat or blood on the seed or burns copal pom. The morning after, the man goes to his land, prays and plants the first few seeds. He does not offer a sacrifice nor does he put a cross on the land. He then returns home where a mixed group of Catholics and evangelicals is waiting for him. They pray together, plant the maize and have a meal.

Taking into consideration all the elements of the planting rituals of both Catholics and evangelicals in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, there is clearly a considerable level of continuity in relation to the planting rituals in Samox and Xalihá. Almost all of the participants pay ritual attention to the moment of planting maize and ask for the same practical things needed for their survival. At this moment most of the Catholic respondents perform the known customary practices at this moment with only a few problematic

elements causing disagreement. The evangelicals perform some customary practices, but the controversial elements which refer to the Tzuultaq'a and to the spirit of maize are left out. In its place they have an official practice promoted by the church - a service - and they pray only to God, though they ask God for the same things which the Catholics request from both God and the Tzuultaq'a. The fact that even in Rubelpec almost all the respondents consider the planting rituals of crucial importance is all the more remarkable because agriculture is far less important to the local economy than in the other communities (see Chapter Seven).

The main discontinuity lies in the much more prominent role which God plays in the prayers of the villagers of Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch compared to those of the villagers of Samox and Xalihá. The evangelicals leave out the Tzuultaq'a altogether and in the eyes of most of the respondents, God has taken over most of the relevant meanings of the planting rituals that are attached to the Tzuultaq'a in Xalihá and Samox. God is the main "person" to be addressed on this occasion. Nevertheless a large majority of respondents go on to address the Tzuultaq'a as well, albeit only the central thirteen Tzuultaq'as.

Planting rituals are mainly performed when planting maize, but the planting of other subsistence crops such as beans receives ritual attention as well. In contrast, the planting of cash crops such as cardamom and coffee does not receive any ritual attention. The only doubtful case I have come across refers to the planting of rice in Xalihá. Rice was taken up as a crop only a few years ago and the villagers did not agree about whether planting rituals should be performed at the rice planting. Of those who had a considerable rice production (more than three quintales a year), some told me that they perform exactly the same rituals when planting rice as they do for maize planting; others denied that while most of the respondents were not at all explicit on this question. The issue remains undecided, which may be related to the fact that rice is both a food and a cash crop.

The planting of maize remains the main occasion for performing planting rituals, but there is disagreement as to whether these rituals should be performed when maize is planted on rented land. In Samox, the villagers who rent a piece of land in neighbouring communities to cultivate their maize do perform planting rituals and plant their maize group-wise. In contrast the villagers of Chaabilchoch do the same individually and do not perform any ritual on this occasion.

B'antioxink

The ultimate goal of the maize cycle is the harvest. In three of the villages almost all of the respondents pay ritual attention to this occasion. Chaabilchoch is the exception to the rule: twenty per cent of the households do not do anything special during their maize harvest while most of the others only do so when the harvest is a good one.

These rituals are called b'antioxink, or thanksgiving. Those who perform these rituals place a few of the new cobs of maize on the altar of the house, pray and invite friends and neighbours to have a meal with them. The Catholics burn copal pom and candles and, together with the maize, they take the cross to the house to symbolize the transfer of the spirit of maize to the house. Some of the villagers of Rubelpec visit some of the central mountains as well. In Xalihá the harvesting is done group-wise. The evangelicals of Rubelpec come together in the church and in the house of the household whose crops are going to be harvested. They bring the first cobs to the church and pray. Once inside the house they pray again and have a meal.

Most of the respondents in the four villages address their prayers to God and the Tzuultaq'a, give thanks for the harvest and protection and ask for a good harvest next time. For some of the villagers of Chaabilchoch God has replaced the Tzuultaq'a as the one who provides them with maize. According to them maize is given directly by God and is no longer mediated by the Tzuultaq'a, and the church - not a mountain - is the place to offer sacrifice. Five respondents express this idea by burning candles in the church before their harvest; afterwards they bring a bag of maize to the church as a sacrifice and token of their gratitude towards God. In the words of one of them: 'It is like a loan from a bank: when we return this loan the bank is satisfied'. He compared the church and God to a bank that lends them life, and after harvesting their maize they have to return this loan of life to God.

Obviously this man does not consider the use of a commercial metaphor referring to God to be blasphemous. Another Catholic respondent offers some of the money earned from selling his maize in much the same way that the evangelicals give part of their income to their church. In the eyes of many respondents of Chaabilchoch there is no problem in associating God with market-oriented production.

Wa'tesink re li kab'l

The performance of customary practices is not limited to specific moments within the agrarian cycle; finishing the construction of a house is another occasion which requires customary rituals. At least, all but a few households in most of the villages I studied think that way. The exception is again Chaabilchoch, where one third of the respondents does not consider this moment to have any special importance.

The customary ritual which is performed at this moment is called wa'tesink re li kab'l. The word wa'tesink refers to all occasions when food is given to "persons" such as putting cocoa and meat on the seed of maize or burying meat as a sacrifice to the Tzuultaq'a; in this case it means 'feeding the house'.

The ceremony is usually led by the man of the household if he is considered to be old enough, otherwise a male pasawink does the job. He slaughters an animal, puts burning candles and copal pom in the four corners of the house and at the centre, he puts the animal's blood and cocoa on the walls or doors in the shape of a cross. He places b'oj and tortillas in the corners, presents food to the saint on the altar of the house and some 'sow' meat at the centre or in the corners; some throw the water used to wash the animal on the roof and all of them pray. As in the case of the mayejak and planting rituals, the animal has to be a turkey as "alien" animals such as chicken should not be used. The friends, neighbours and relatives invited to participate in the ceremony have a meal afterwards.

In Samox and Xalihá these elements make up the wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals as it is performed by almost all the households. In these communities all but a few villagers address both God and the Tzuultaq'a as well as the spirit of the house. The villagers explained to me that this spirit emanates from the life that was inherent in the materials which went into building the house - the wood, straw etc. - and that this life has its origin in the Tzuultaq'a. They told me that these trees and plants should perhaps not have been cut because the Tzuultaq'a might have had another purpose for them. So they have to sacrifice and give food to the materials and to the Tzuultaq'a. In the words of one of the villagers:

> 'We have to give food to the materials and throw a bit of blood on the walls to make sure that the spirit of the mountain cools down, because we cut down some trees.'

Another respondent told me:

> 'After cutting a tree or a branch it will cry for three days so we have to feed it'.

In short, just like the spirit of the maize, the spirit of the house stems from the Tzuultaq'a, and just as the villagers feed the maize seed by putting blood or cocoa on it before the planting, they feed the spirit of the house before entering the house. Both kinds of spirits and their source, the Tzuultaq'a, have to be appeased and the spirits have to be kept alive.

When addressing the Tzuultaq'a and the spirit of the house, the villagers ask them for the things they need such as protection from illness, accidents, bad spirits and harm. They ask for their well-being, that there may be peace in the house, that their children may grow well and that the house may not move from its place. The villagers of Xalihá and Samox believe that illness, problems and harm are like persons or 'strange men' who can 'enter the house', so they ask the spirit of the house to not let them in. In their eyes these rituals are a very serious matter. They stressed that if they are not performed then the spirit of the house and the Tzuultaq'a may

become very angry and cause someone to suddenly become very ill or else another serious problem will arise.

In Rubelpec all except one household pay attention to the moment when they enter a new house, but not all perform the same practices. About eighty per cent of the households perform customary practices similar to those of Samox and Xalihá. All address God, a few the Tzuultaq'a as well, and eighty per cent of the respondents actually believe that the house has a spirit that has to be addressed. This spirit stems from the life which is inherent in the building materials. However in contrast to the villagers of Samox and Xalihá, the respondents in Rubelpec do not think that these materials originate in the Tzuultaq'a but that they stem directly from God. One of the evangelicals added the idea of Satan substituting for bad spirits:

> 'The wood and the trees that we cut down, no one knows how many years they had. God gave life to all these trees. We have to come together and pray to assure that evil may not enter the house. If we do not, Satan will harm someone, an animal will die, or even a person.'

Apart from those practising customary rituals there is a group of fifteen respondents in Rubelpec who invite friends, neighbours and relatives to come together to pray and have a meal. The evangelicals as well as some Catholic households perform these practices which substitute for customary ones, and the members of the Asamblea de Dios first have a service in their church. These households do not address the Tzuultaq'a and they do not believe that the house has a spirit. One of them said to me: 'The house has no spirit, it is a thing'. Another respondent told me: 'Because of Christ there is no need for crosses of blood any more'. As in the case of the mayejak, these respondents see God and customary practices as opposites.

Compared to customary wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals in Xalihá and Samox, continuity in Rubelpec is expressed by the fact that almost all pay ritual attention to this moment and ask for the same things as in Xalihá and Samox. Discontinuity is apparent in the practices which substitute for customary rituals and in the fact that those who believe in the spirit of the house relate that spirit to God rather than the Tzuultaq'a.

As in the case of the b'antioxink rituals, there are important differences among the households in Chaabilchoch. Here one third of the respondents practice customary rituals, another third including the evangelicals perform the same substitution rituals as the minority in Rubelpec while the rest do nothing to mark this occasion. Moreover, almost none of them believe that the house has a spirit. 'We used to think that everything has life, now we know that all has been created by God', as one respondent told me. The respondents in Chaabilchoch address their prayers primarily to God and only some of them mention the Tzuultaq'a as well, though subordinated to God. The requests remain the same, though.

This relative weakness of wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals in Chaabilchoch may be related to the fact that many of the houses are made of materials, such as bricks and corrugated iron, that do not originate in the natural surroundings or grow "on the Tzuultaq'a". In addition, the army has forced the villagers to build their houses in a clearly demarcated village centre and as a result the geographical unity of the house, the animals, the surrounding crops and the Tzuultaq'a on which this unity is based has been disrupted.

For other reasons this unity is not obvious either in Samox. Here, important parts of the houses are made of bricks and corrugated iron as well. Nevertheless the villagers of Samox consider customary wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals and meanings to be very important and thus, these material and geographical circumstances do not entirely determine the fate of wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals.

4.2.2 *Parish-promoted practices*

Next to customary practices there is another category of religious practices performed by the Q'eqchi'es: those promoted by the various parishes. These parish-promoted practices do not constitute an unequivocal category since they differ from one parish to another depending mainly on the kind of pastoral work that is applied. The practices that all parishes have in common will be discussed in this section: the Mass and the celebration of the Word, the administration of sacraments and the preparation of those who are to receive them, women's groups, conversions as well as Christmas rituals, the Holy Week, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

The Mass and the celebration of the Word

One of the special occasions in the religious life of every community is the visit of the priest a few times a year. During these visits he celebrates one or two Masses, marries young couples, baptizes new babies, gives the First Communion to young children and if necessary administers the extreme unction to some of the villagers. Then he has a meal with the others and enjoys the music.

In villages that have been designated as parish centres such as Chaabilchoch, it is not only the members of the local community who participate but those from surrounding communities as well. In Samox the recently designated young Q'eqchi' priest of the parish of Telemán, who has been trained by the Salesians, tried to introduce the centre system and appointed Samox as the centre, but at the time of fieldwork he had not been successful (yet) in convincing the villagers of the need to spend time and money on the construction of large centre buildings.

Despite the new experiments in creating a special Q'eqchi' Mass and introducing customary rituals into the liturgy, the Masses in the villages that I studied in detail roughly follow a classical scheme. The women and small

children usually sit on one side of the church while the men and boys from the age of eight or nine onwards sit on the other side. The catechists and sometimes the pasawink are seated at the front and the focus is on the priest. In Salesian-run parishes, the priest concentrates on the main issues of sacramentalist discourse (see the previous chapter) such as Biblical themes and moral values. God appears here as Someone powerful and caring Who has to be obeyed and respected and Who will help and protect them. In communities from parishes where a liberating pastoral policy is applied, the priest refers to customary practices and meanings in addition to standard Catholic themes and rituals.

One such Masses I attended in Xalihá in 1992 illustrates this. The building was decorated with fringed strips of plastic. Flowers, candles, tortillas and small bottles of b'oj were placed on the altar. The pasawink started by saying the rosary and burning copal pom and candles. The Mass allowed for little active participation on the part of the villagers except for the many Q'eqchi' songs and the time left over for individual prayers after the Communion. The villagers used this time to pray aloud in a very dedicated and serious way, talking about their family, children, animals and crops, the land they cultivate, their sorrows and their worries. They mentioned God, the saints, Esquipulas, Christ, the prophets, Santa María, and asked them to provide for the well-being of their family, crops, animals and community in much the same way as in a yo'lek. I was impressed by the apparently deeply felt need to address all these "persons". Their prayers touched on their daily problems and anxieties.

This practical characteristic of religion in Xalihá was also expressed in the call of the priest asking God to make sure that worms and insects would not eat the villagers' crops. They used to have many problems with these creatures but then they organized a special Mass and the worms and insects disappeared. Now the animals had apparently returned and God had to be asked once again to do something about it. There were lots of small bottles with worms and insects on the altar and these were blessed by the priest. Afterwards the animals were returned to the fields where they came from, supposedly still alive and instructed by God not to eat too much. The idea was to ask God to help solve this problem without denying the worms and insects a fair share of the crops. They should not be exterminated. Whether some villagers would have preferred all these small animals to be destroyed all at once is hard to say. In any case it is interesting to note that the priest went along with these customary practices and meanings. So much for this particular Mass in Xalihá.

In general the celebration of the Word follows the same pattern as the Mass only some of the catechists - and in Samox and Xalihá some pasawink as well - take over the leading role of the priest and there is no consecration. The celebration of the Word substitutes for the former customary 'change of the flowers' feast on Sunday before the Catholic restoration. In the Carchá area this feast was led exclusively by the chinames and pasawink who had

more than just a practical role. They led the prayers in latin and addressed everyone about the values of community life. All would carry flowers and place them before the statue of the saint. There was marimba and harp music, food was served by the chinam women and several elderly respondents told me that many would get drunk every Sunday after this feast.

Nowadays the celebration of the Word has replaced this feast in every community and the catechists have taken over the discursive tasks. In their speeches they stress Biblical themes such as the role of Santa María and the life of Christ. They emphasize the importance of the church and the pope and urge the villagers to avoid being deceived by evangelicals. Their moral statements underline the value of harmonious family life, the need to maintain the existing division of labour between men and women, to respect each other, not to spend money on alcohol, to contribute to community tasks, promote community life, avoid conflicts and problems etc. These are standard Catholic contents and meanings. The celebrations of the Word is often used as an occasion for local leaders, such as the health promoter or the president of the local development committee, to address and inform the villagers.

The celebration of the Word is the occasion for a majority of the Catholics to meet every Sunday. In Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch there are several households that refuse to attend these celebrations and in Rubelpec, many adult men rarely attend the celebration because their work takes them elsewhere. In Xalihá and Rubelpec a few households sometimes go to the nearby towns of San Fernando Chahal, San Agustín Chahal or San Pedro Carchá on Sunday. In Samox two households do not attend because they have economic problems with the rest of the community. In Xalihá, a problem arose recently because the newly formed football club planned to have its matches on Sunday morning. Whether this is an indication of dwindling interest in the celebration of the Word on the part of young men or whether the attraction of the game is simply impossible to resist, is hard to say.

The sacraments

The priests administers the sacraments, but it is the catechists who instruct the parents of babies who are to be baptized, the children who are to receive their First Communion and the young couples who are going to be married. During courses that last several days, they teach them the values of parenthood, of membership in the church and of marriage. The catechists' discourse indicates that the existing division of labour between men and women, the need to lead a decent life, responsibility towards each other, towards their children, towards the church and the local community are linked to God's will and the authority of the Bible.

Before the child is actually baptized the parents choose the *padrinos* (the godparents of the child) who take the child to the priest to be baptized. After the ceremony the family invites the grandparents, compadres, uncles and aunts to celebrate the occasion, to eat meat and drink *atol*[8]. In the past the villagers of Xalihá would carry the child to the mountain and stay there for three days but now Catholic practice has replaced this customary ritual. In Rubelpec babies are baptized in the parish church of San Pedro Carchá.

As outlined above, in Salesian-run parishes children receive their First Communion in the central parish church. This fact emphasizes the importance which the priests attribute to young boys and girls and to their participation in the church, symbolized by the use of the central parish church instead of the local one.

Marriage procedures are quite complex among the Q'eqchi'es. To start with, marriages arranged by parents have been quite common among the Q'eqchi'es. Nowadays the father of the young man has to visit the girl's parents up to six times to ask for the hand of their daughter. After the final approval is given, several months are spent preparing the celebration. After the Mass, friends and relatives gather together, the girl is accompanied to the house 'where the fire burns' (the house of the groom's parents). There they all have a meal and then the parents and padrinos stay on to give advice to the couple. While they build their own house, the couple first live in the house of the man's parents. In Rubelpec three days after the wedding the couple goes to the Calvary to pray for happiness.

We have here an example of customary practices which do not appear to be problematic because they confirm family life and thus coincide with official parish goals. The same holds true for funeral rituals. After someone has died, friends, relatives and neighbours keep vigil for one or two nights and beans and tortillas are served to those present. The *petate*[9] he or she used, some white cloth and his or her broken thurible are placed in his coffin. The day after, they pray and bury the dead with lots of flowers. During nine days a novena is observed and a celebration of the Word is held to make sure the deceased is received by God.

In the villages that I studied, most of the Catholics had received the sacraments and participated in the preparation courses. Nevertheless in Xalihá, some complain about the catechists telling them how to behave. In the words of one villager: 'They [the catechists - hs] are no better persons than we are, so what gives them the right to tell us these things'. In Rubelpec and Samox there is a considerable minority of households headed by an unmarried couple, 17 out of 42 households in Samox. The catechist who instructs young couples in Samox told me that this is because many couples do not have the resources to organize the wedding feast. However my data indicate that there is no relation between marriage and economic

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[8]. Drink made out of maize flour.
[9]. Little mat used to sleep upon.

performance. In Rubelpec several Catholics have not been baptized. In short, while the priests and catechists in these four villages are successfully urging the villagers to accept most of the sacraments, their influence has its limits.

Women's groups

In three of the four communities that I studied in detail, there are active women's groups. Only in Xalihá was there none, and the religious women of Chahal complained that in their parish, the male population does not allow their daughters and women in general to meet without men being present, let alone going outside the community to follow courses in the parish.

Both in Samox and in Chaabilchoch there is a group of about forty women who meet once or several times a month under the guidance of two female catechists. In Rubelpec there are separate groups for older women, young married women and for girls, each group having between thirty and forty members. These groups sing and pray, listen to Biblical explanations and moral guidelines, visit the sick, help them and pray for them. The catechists teach the women practical skills such as weaving, embroidery and pottery. Only in Samox do the women discuss customary rituals. In the previous chapter it has been shown that these groups do not play a role in criticizing or modifying existing gender patterns.

The elderly women in Rubelpec call themselves 'The Daughters of Santa María' and Santa María plays an important role in their prayers. This name and practice are an important asset for the Catholic church in defining its profile vis-à-vis evangelical churches. However, the women express some clear customary features in their ways of addressing Santa María: she is asked to protect their families and animals and to provide the things they need for survival: food, drink, maize and good harvests. Moreover they sacrifice copal pom and candles to her. This way of dealing with a non-visible "person" is very common in customary religion. We have here an example of an official Catholic symbol being reinterpreted in a customary way.

In the parish of Carchá a network of women's groups has emerged which is beyond the control of the priests. They are supported by people who apply a liberating pastoral policy. These groups have both Catholic and evangelical members and, besides learning practical skills, they discuss national problems and aspects of social reality. One of their initiatives was to send a delegation of women to the capital to see how people in the popular neighbourhoods live. After returning home they told the groups what they had seen and concluded that it was better to stay where they are and to not migrate to the city. Comparing this example with the restrictions found in Chahal and Xalihá, it becomes clear that in the Q'eqchi' region there is considerable variation in the freedom women have to move from one place to the other.

Conversion

Converting Q'eqchi'es is one of the prime goals in the religious competition between the various churches, so conversion has become an important Catholic practice as well. In Rubelpec I interviewed a woman who had been an active member of the Nazarene church for twelve years together with her mother. Eight years ago she stopped attending after marrying a Catholic. Recently her mother died, she decided to convert to the Catholic church and their children were baptized.

This example is instructive of the way in which family relations intervene in religious affairs. In Samox, Xalihá and Chaabilchoch households as such are members of a church. The same holds true in Rubelpec for most of the households, but not in all cases. To be sure, the woman referred to above wanted to stay in the Nazarene church as long as her mother lived and changed over to her husband's church the moment her mother died. However the fact that she married a man from another church means that in this village family and household relations are not always strong enough to force members of the same family or household to stay within the same church. This conclusion is confirmed by one household I visited which consists of Catholic grandparents and their son and daughter-in-law who attend the Nazarene church. Apparently, ecclesiastical choices in Rubelpec have become individualized to a certain extent but even here, households that are ecclesiastically mixed are only exceptions to the rule that households are the basic unit of church membership in the region.

Christmas

Of course, the parish encourages the Q'eqchi'es to observe special days such as Christmas, Holy Week and All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. The priest supports the celebration of these feasts but in the four communities that I studied in detail, many of the rituals practised on these occasions and the meanings attributed to them have a customary background.

In all four communities the Christmas celebration starts with the customary practice of the *posadas*. This means that during the nine days preceding Christmas, a statue of a saint is carried in procession from one house to another, staying one day in every house. There, the people gather to pray and say the rosary and, in some villages, dinner is served at midnight by the owner of the house. The following day the statue goes to another house where a similar meeting takes place. On Christmas Day a celebration of the Word is held. These are standard elements of the celebration of Christmas.

However there are substantial differences between the communities. In Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch, the central meaning of the celebration is to commemorate the birth of Christ. In Chaabilchoch an image of Christ is carried in procession and He is in the mind of the villagers and in their

prayers on this occasion. In Rubelpec the villagers thank God for the year that is coming to an end and ask for a good new year. To them Christmas is also an occasion to perform their mayejak substitution practice of collecting crops and other products that are offered to a health clinic run by the religious women.

In contrast to Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, the birth of Christ is not the focal point of the celebration of Christmas in Samox and Xalihá. In these two villages saints such as Santa María and San José receive most of the attention. In Samox both saints are carried in procession and Christmas serves rather as a patron saints' feast dedicated to these two saints and as an opportunity to perform mayejak.

In Xalihá, Christmas is not even celebrated by the whole community. Some go to San Agustín Chahal to participate in the celebrations there and others decorate the altar in their house. In Semococh, one of the four hamlets which make up the village of Xalihá, Christmas is celebrated at the hamlet level. People from the other hamlets are invited but only the residents of Semococh participate. A few years ago they bought an image of San José which is kept in one of the houses rather than in the village church. Since San José is there, the posadas are observed.

This new role of San José reflects the tensions between the hamlets. The fact itself that the residents of Semococh bought their own saint may indicate that they are constructing their own patron saint's symbol, and a patron saint is the most visible mark of a distinct community. Rumours about the construction of another church in Semococh should be seen in the same perspective.

In short, in the two communities that belong to Salesian-run parishes the Biblical meaning of the birth of Christ dominates the celebration of Christmas. In the other two, where the policy of liberating pastoral work is applied, Christmas is rather focused on customary meanings (the saints, patron saints' feasts, mayejak). In all the communities the celebration of Christmas includes at least some customary practices. In Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch these practices do not cause any problem with the priests as long as their meanings remain Bible-oriented and practices such as the sacrifice are Christianized.

Holy Week

Holy Week is another such moment in the religious calendar which the priests want the Q'eqchi'es to pay attention to, though its observance incites the Q'eqchi'es to perform practices that have a customary background. This is the case in Samox, Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec. In Xalihá by contrast, most of the villagers pay little attention to Christmas and indeed to Holy Week as well. Some of them go to San Agustín Chahal to participate in the processions and Masses while others decorate the altar in their houses, offer

sacrifices, burn candles and pray in their homes; however nothing special is organized in the village church.

In Samox, Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch celebrations of the Word or Masses are held on several days during this week, processions take place and the villagers have meals together to which neighbouring communities are invited. In Rubelpec some go to San Pedro Carchá to join the processions. In Chaabilchoch the statue of Christ is carried from the graveyard to the church stopping at several houses, the feet of twelve men are washed in public and the priest hears confessions.

In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec the death of Christ constitutes the central Bible-oriented meaning of these activities and customary practices only reinforce it. In Samox this meaning is complemented by customary ones: after the celebration of the Word the pasawink perform their mayejak on a nearby mountain. Christ's resurrection does not receive much attention in any of the villages.

In the towns of Cobán and Carchá the Holy Week celebrations are impressive. In Carchá the hermandades of the túnicas blancas and the túnicas moradas organize activities such as processions, the Way of the Cross and the feet washing on various days of the Holy Week. In these cases it remains difficult to talk about parish-promoted practices because the priests do not approve of these activities.

In Cobán the hermandades are more appreciated by the priests of the various parishes but their activities do not constitute a priority for them. Here the Hermandad del Calvario organizes a Way of the Cross six Fridays before Easter, starting at the church on the Calvary mountain and ending at the house of the president of the hermandad. The procession stops to pray at 14 houses that have put up an altar with an image of Christ, two cups of water, candles, flowers and copal pom in front of their house. Only Q'eqchi'es participate: men carry an image of Christ and women a statue of Santa María. On both sides of the street, women and girls stand in line and hold candles and all of them listen to the rather depressing music coming out of an amplified speaker.

On the Monday of Holy Week, the hermandad organizes a similar Way of the Cross. At the houses where the procession stops, the members of the hermandad receive food and in many cases, the woman of the house becomes particularly emotional, crying and talking about her problems and worries. On Tuesday the people of the neighbourhood of San Vicente are invited to have a meal at the house of the president. On Wednesday there is another procession and on Maundy Thursday it is the children's turn to have theirs. On Good Friday all join in the central procession of the Hermandad del Señor Sepultado.

On the Monday of Holy Week, the bishop leads his own Way of the Cross leaving the cathedral and going around the central square. He stops fourteen times and calls on everyone to pray for those who have been in the news recently because they suffer from injustice. During the Way of the

Cross in 1991 he mentioned, among others, those who have to endure human rights violations, the refugees who are hiding in Mexico, the difficult position of widows and the communities facing conflict with those who claim their land, and he was not afraid to denounce those responsible for their sufferings. Mgr. Flores is aware of the social and political aspects of the Holy Week celebrations (see Chapter Three), and is prepared to express his commitment to those who are suffering from marginalization, oppression and exploitation.

The day of the deceased

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are further examples of parish-promoted feasts which give rise to customary rituals. In Samox and Xalihá the ceremonies of the first and second of November include three ingredients. First, a celebration of the Word is held. Secondly, the villagers visit the graves of their deceased relatives, place flowers on the graves and say the rosary. In Samox the two take place together because the dead are buried inside of the church. Finally the villagers go home. They adorn the altar of their house, put flowers, fruit, cocoa and food in front of it, burn copal pom and candles and pray. They invite neighbours, relatives and friends to pass by and have some food.

Almost all the Catholics in Rubelpec and most them in Chaabilchoch do the same on those days. A majority of evangelicals in Chaabilchoch, Rubelpec and Samox pay no attention to these occasions but both in Chaabilchoch and in Rubelpec, several evangelical household actually do perform customary rituals on these days. In Chaabilchoch a considerable minority pay no attention to this occasion. In short, in both Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec the observance of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day does not coincide with ecclesiastical categories.

Almost all those who practice these rituals agree that these days are meant to commemorate those who have passed away. However the consensus does not cover the specific customary meaning of these rituals. The idea is that the deceased return to the house and eat some of the food that has been put in front of the altar. In the words of one of the respondents:

> 'The deceased pass by like the wind. They say that the deceased come to have a look at what they left behind. If we do not put anything in front of the altar they return sadly.'

Another respondent told me:

> 'Once a relative did not comply with the need to perform this custom. Then his deceased grandmother came, she cried and asked him why he had not put the things on his altar and waited for her.'

Some even stressed that the deceased will cause harm or illness to those who do not wait for them or put food on the altar. As to whether the deceased actually return and whether they can cause harm there are clear differences of opinion in all the communities, though in Xalihá and Samox most of the respondents said they believe this.

In short, although the observance of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day is parish-promoted, almost all the Catholics, and even some evangelical respondents, perform customary rituals; in Xalihá and Samox especially, most of the villagers attribute customary meanings to these rituals alongside the official meaning.

4.2.3 *Evangelical practices*

We have already come across several examples of evangelicals performing customary practices. Even more, the evangelicals are very capable of constructing ritual forms and meanings that fit into the categories of practices and meanings which their churches promote as substitutes for customary rituals. These substitution practices show that they feel the need to pay ritual attention to the moments which give rise to customary rituals and indicate an important degree of continuity as regards these customary meanings. The standard practices and their related meanings as promoted by their churches will be the subject of the discussion that follows.

This discussion is based primarily on interviews with evangelical respondents in Samox, Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec. There are no evangelicals in Xalihá. The number of these interviews is reduced (see Chapter Two) which limits the representativity of this analysis of their practices. Nevertheless, I have come across data and statements that shed an interesting light on some of the lines of interpretation of the phenomenon of evangelism among the Q'eqchi'es in particular and Guatemalans in general. The practices that will be presented are the evangelical services, the campaigns, prayer healing meetings, conversion and the tithes.[10]

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[10]. Baptism, marriage, the funeral practices and the celebrations of Christmas and Holy Week will bot be discussed because my information on these practices does not present anything new. The only fact to be noted is that these practices are not complemented by customary ones.

Services

The services of the churches on which I have information[11] have similar standard elements: the believers read and comment on Bible texts, pray and sing. The emphasis is on addressing God and Christ, listening to what they think God wants them to do, and learning how to lead a decent life. Bible explanations determine which issues are raised and their moral consequences. One of the households is able to compare the services of the Baptist church in Carchá and the Asamblea de Dios church in Rubelpec. This household is a member of the former but participates in the latter as well. The woman of the household stressed that the services in both churches are almost the same. The only difference is that the Baptist church is more joyful because there are more people so the singing is more impressive.

The statement of this woman suggests that the differences that are stressed in the literature (see Chapter Three) concerning the various types of evangelical churches should not be overestimated. I have statements on a historical church (Baptist church), "Holiness" churches (Nazarene churches), and Pentecostal ones (Asamblea de Dios, Iglesia de Dios de la Nueva Jerusalén), and their members come up with precisely the same answers to my question about what they do in the most important element of their practices: the services.

Moreover, in answer to my question concerning the things they talk about at these services, the same woman even indicated that 'all the churches belong to God and the Word of God is the same'. The woman from Rubelpec who recently converted to the Catholic church after having been a member of the Nazarene church, and the members of the household whose grandparents are Catholics while grandson and daughter attend the Nazarene's church, also suggest by their answers that ecclesiastical differences do not account for much: 'The Word of God stays the same'. The only difference they pointed to were the role of saints. Either the differences in practices and discourse between the churches, including the Salesian-run church of Rubelpec, are not very substantial, or the villagers are not very interested in these differences and hardly notice them.

The evangelical churches on which I have information hold an impressive number of services each week, varying from twice a week in the case of the Asamblea de Dios to four times a week in the case of the Iglesia de Dios de la Nueva Jerusalén and the Nazarene church in the community neighbouring Rubelpec. These services include the Bible study meetings. The members of these churches told me that they attend all these services and

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[11]. This information was collected by conducting interviews with members and refers to the Asamblea de Dios church in Rubelpec, the Nazarene church in a neighbouring village, the Baptist church in Carchá, the Iglesia de Dios de la Nueva Jerusalén in Chaabilchoch and the Nazarene church close to Samox.

meetings, which means that the evangelicals probably spend much more time in their church meetings than the Catholics. Moreover fellow believers from other villages regularly come along to these services and *vice versa*. The church offers an intensive community life to its members, one which transcends the limits of the village. It appears that evangelical churches are able to offer significant possibilities for socialization.

Campaigns

The attraction of evangelical churches is especially demonstrated when they organize special campaigns once in a while. Then they have meetings involving hundreds of fellow believers from several villages and missionaries and ministers from other places come to visit. They preach the Word of God, some are baptized and they all have a meal together. The evangelicals invite all the villagers, Catholics and evangelicals alike, to take part. In the words of one of the evangelicals, the aim is 'to win over the soul of everyone'. In general, though, the proselytizing efforts of the evangelicals are not very aggressive. Only one of the evangelical households I interviewed plans to visit all the households in the village to preach the message of his church; the other evangelicals do not.

Prayer healing

This is not to say that religious competition is not important. An important asset in this competition in both Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec is prayer healing. During the services the evangelicals pray for sick villagers, both Catholics and evangelicals, and they often visit these patients after the service. They help them with household tasks or work on their land and sometimes even collect money to buy the things they need. In Rubelpec they bought the corrugated iron sheets to build a house for a widow with health problems.

The main reason for their visits is to pray for the patient and they all firmly believe in the healing power of their prayers. One of the Rubelpec evangelicals gave me the example of his son who suffers from cancer. The members of the Asamblea de Dios came to his house to pray and now he no longer feels any pain. Prayer healing visits are part of the standard practices of all the evangelical churches but in the case of the Nazarenes, not everyone participates. The proselytizing character of these meetings that are meant to pray for patients is shown by the fact that in both Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, the Catholics have taken over the practice. In Rubelpec especially the women's groups are very active in this respect and are criticized by evangelical leaders for this reason.

Conversion

What is at stake in the competition among churches is winning over Q'eqchi'es in order to convert them. The previous chapter showed that evangelical churches have been quite successful in converting Q'eqchi'es and some explanations of their quantitative growth were discussed including the influence of the army and the finqueros. However the crucial question still needs to be answered: why have so many Q'eqchi'es turned to an evangelical church in the last few decades?

Several explanations have been put forward in the literature on this question in Guatemala as well as by respondents in the region. One of these points to the fact that many of the new converts live in conditions of constant poverty, marginalization and insecurity. These conditions are often aggravated by alcoholism, disease, social isolation and violence which destroy family life and exhaust their capacity to cope with their problems. In such a situation, existing symbolic frames of reference may no longer be adequate as a way of making sense of their lives. Pentecostalism especially seems able to provide a meaningful alternative: it says that Guatemalans are tempted by the devil who is putting them to the test. The Bible is "proven" to have predicted all their suffering and things get worse until Christ returns to renew all things and put an end to anguish and misery. Within this perspective, the dark world and the hardships they suffer begin to make sense and there is hope for the near future.

Moreover according to Pentecostal churches, immediate salvation is at hand by turning to Christ, accepting God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. The individual can recover his or her dignity, construct a new identity as a believer and do something about the situation: he or she should put his or her life in order, stop drinking and lead an industrious family life. Pentecostal churches oblige people to do this, and offer spiritual healing in case of illness. By turning to an evangelical church, the conditions are there for a reconciliation with those who threaten violence. In addition, Pentecostal churches offer opportunities for re-socialization to those who have lost their family or local community, as well as an opportunity for individual salvation. In short, this explanation maintains that Pentecostalism offers a symbolic frame of reference which allows people to make sense out of their difficult situation and to solve at least some of the immediate problems which tend to aggravate it.[12]

Contrary to the foregoing explanation, other authors hold that evangelism meets the symbolic needs of precisely those who have a higher income and are experiencing upward social mobility. The austere evangelical morality, the positive attitude towards education, literacy, sobriety and thrift stimulate believers to improve their economic and social position, while

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[12]. See Garrard 1986: 201, 207; Martínez, A., Samandú 1990: 58-61.

success is interpreted as a sign of God's spiritual grace.[13] Moreover, evangelical churches have the same advantages as those offered by the Salesians to their younger catechists: one does not need to wait for years before a position of respect and status is achieved within the local community or spend a great deal of money on social obligations attached to the position of cofrade or chinam.[14]

In the end, this explanation and the previous one are not necessarily contradictory. Someone may turn to evangelism as a way of making sense of a difficult situation and forcing a rupture while feeling stimulated by the church to work hard and do the utmost to improve his or her economic position. Nevertheless, it is still an open question to what extent conversion to an evangelical church means a complete rupture with a previous life and culture. It has been argued that there is at least a minimum degree of continuity. Garrard even states that those evangelical churches that have reached the highest level of "indigenization" are those that have been most successful in winning converts. She gives the examples of Guatemalans taking over the leadership of their church, thus curtailing the influence of North American missionaries. She also points to those churches that were founded as a result of a Guatemalan initiative. Garrard claims that a minimum degree of continuity eases the transition to an evangelical church.[15]

In the case of the Q'eqchi'es, there is much to be said in support of these explanations. Many of them certainly live in a situation of poverty and marginalization aggravated by illness, alcoholism, social isolation and violence. In the four communities that I studied in detail, the evangelical churches offered a remedy for most of these aggravations. It has already been shown that they offer curative services and help patients cope with their economic problems. Several evangelicals indicated that they consider prayer healing meetings to be a very attractive aspect of their church. Illness led one villager in Samox to convert to a Nazarene church, but he decided to return to the Catholic church after his recovery.

Conversion to an evangelical church can also serve as a way of dealing with another aggravation: alcoholism. Of the twenty evangelical respondents I interviewed, eight told me that their conversion was directly related to their desire to stop drinking and to start living a decent and organized life. 'I wanted to make a change', several evangelicals told me after explaining that they used to drink a lot, that they had many quarrels

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[13]. Garrard 1986: 194; Annis 1987: 75-106, a study of the town of San Antonio Aguas Calientes situated not far from the capital.

[14]. A similar argument has been put forward by Ricardo Falla explaining the "conversion" to the Catholic lay movement *Acción Católica* by young industrious members of the community of San Antonio Ilotenango, El Quiché. Falla 1978. Apparently, some of the reasons for indigenous people to turn to an evangelical church coincide with those of people who become active members of the Catholic church.

[15]. Garrard 1986: 202-204, 216.

and problems within their household and spent their money on alcoholic beverages. Evangelical churches urged them to stop drinking, offered them a strict set of moral values to hold on to and welcomed them in their community. One respondent in Rubelpec said: 'God invited me to leave all the bad things behind'.

The evangelicals consider the moral behaviour, the order, discipline and devotion of their fellow church members to be very attractive. In their view evangelicals take their religion more seriously in relation to their personal behaviour than Catholics. Some of them criticise the Catholics for drinking too much and not behaving properly.

Other reasons mentioned by evangelical respondents to explain their conversion include social isolation, the need to re-socialize and personal feuds with leading members of the Catholic church. In Rubelpec three evangelicals indicated that some sort of conflict with Catholics had caused them to leave the Catholic church. One was involved in a land dispute with some Catholics in the place where he used to live, another was quarrelling with some persons who worked with the priests in Carchá. This man's wife left the Catholic church seventeen years ago in the village where she used to live because the Catholics despised her for wearing typical Q'eqchi' clothing, a problem she did not encounter in the Baptist church to which she converted afterwards. Several priests indicated that in their parishes, it was precisely those who were on the margins of community life who converted to an evangelical church. They also attribute an important role to personal feuds and conflicts.

The important role played by personal conflicts and social isolation in converting to an evangelical church and the fact that those on the margins of the community were most likely to become converts, undermines the argument of many Catholics that the evangelical churches were dividing the local communities. It would appear that there was no such thing as a united and homogeneous local community before evangelical churches managed to gain converts. If there is a process on the way which is leading towards more internal stratification and differentiation (see Chapter Seven), then the introduction of evangelical churches seems much more a part of this process than a major cause of it.

The fourth aggravating factor, violence, is also relevant to explanations of Q'eqchi' conversions to an evangelical church. In the previous chapter we showed that such a conversion was seen as a way of saving one's life in the conflict-ridden areas of the Q'eqchi' region. In short, my data confirm the explanation of the growth of evangelical churches and point to the fact that these churches deal with specific factors which aggravate an already difficult situation: illness, alcoholism, social isolation and violence.

However, this confirmation only refers to the practical, social and moral aspects of the explanation. There is hardly any indication that the alternative meaningful framework which allowed evangelical churches to provide a new sense to their lives played a significant role in the conversion

of my respondents. Apart from a religiously based morality and God's capacity to cure diseases, my respondents mentioned no specific religious meaning that attracted them to the evangelical church. Moreover, four catechists expressed the same motivation for becoming catechists as the evangelicals for their conversion: to stop drinking and pull their life together.[16] Apparently an evangelical conversion and the decision to become a catechist can work out the same way: making a break or change in one's personal life. The villagers are not very interested in the doctrinal aspects or specific religious meanings which differentiate one church from another. One evangelical in Rubelpec told me about the Catholic church: 'The only problem about them is their drinking, all the rest is all right'. The only doctrinal difference that does matter is the dispute about the role of saints.

It has to be stressed, though, that almost all the data I have on the evangelicals refer to villages in which the Catholic church is run by the Salesians. Whether the Q'eqchi'es in communities in parishes run by priests applying the concept of liberating pastoral work show the same lack of interest concerning differences in doctrine, is hard to say.

In any case, the fact that conversion does not exclude a significant level of continuity makes it easier to go over to another church. Part of the successful conversion efforts by evangelical churches can be explained precisely by the fact that the discursive consequences of conversion are limited.

The tithes

Activities such as campaigns and the maintenance of the church building cost the evangelicals a considerable amount of money. A campaign can cost up to several thousand quetzales. To raise this money every household is supposed to contribute ten per cent of earnings, the tithes, which does not include the value of subsistence crops.

Ten per cent of one's income may seem to be a considerable amount of money, but whether the evangelicals actually do contribute that amount is hard to say. The members of the Asamblea de Dios in Rubelpec pay the minister each month. One of them said that he spent about five to ten quetzales each month which comes to 60 to 120 quetzales a year. However, his gross income (GP, see Chapter Seven) in 1992 is Q. 6464.24 so his contribution does not even come close to ten per cent of his income. The

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[16]. Evangelicals gave the same reasons for leaving the Catholic church as four respondents had indicated for becoming catechists, *i.e.* to stop drinking. In addition, Catholics criticise those who perform customary rituals for drinking abuses. All this opens up the question of what the facts concerning alcohol abuse really are. I do not want to make a statement on this highly controversial issue because all the respondents' expressions on this matter are biased in this respect.

Nazarenes told me they contribute about ten centavos every week. In practice the contributions do not seem to amount to considerable sums.

4.3 Q'eqchi' religious discourse: general characteristics

Q'eqchi' religion is by no means homogeneous or uniform. The foregoing treatment of specific practices has shown that every practice has its own variations among the various communities and even between the various households within the same community.

However it is precisely these variations which make it possible to draw some general lines and capture some common trends. This, of course, has a strong interpretative character: it is the researcher making scientific sense out of the Q'eqchi'es making religious sense of the world. The scientific quality of this interpretation mainly derives from the fact that it is based on the foregoing analysis of specific religious practices and related meanings and on extra data that will be added in this section. This way this interpretation can be controlled and verified. In the previous section the emphasis was on particular religious practices and the meanings associated with each one of them. No Q'eqchi' has ever interrelated these particular meanings to me in an all encompassing framework. The attempt to work out these interrelations, the results of which will be presented in the following pages, is perhaps my main contribution as a researcher.

The various religious meanings have become intelligible to me by clustering them into two main principles which "organize" the discourse of the various Q'eqchi'es. One of these may be called "the customary principle", and the other "the Bible-oriented principle". The organization of these meanings into these two principles allows for both consistency and coherence, and for contradictions and tensions to become explicit.

This differentiation into two principles is not primarily based on a church perspective but on the main distinctions made by the Q'eqchi'es themselves concerning religious practices and meanings. To be sure, in the previous sections on Catholics becoming catechists and on conversions to either the Catholic or to an evangelical church, it has been shown that, except for the role of saints, the villagers have little interest in differences of religious meanings between the various churches. In addition, many Q'eqchi' meanings and practices have a mixed customary and church-promoted origin and in general the Q'eqchi'es do not emphasize religious differences.

However, we have come across several examples of Q'eqchi'es treating as opposites customary meanings and practices on the one hand, and meanings and practices that point to a contemporary Biblical origin as they are promoted by churches, on the other. Concerning the mayejak, the patron saint's feast and the wa'tesink re li kab'l, several villagers of Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec themselves make it a point of opposing

important customary meanings and practices to the Word of God and to good moral behaviour. In the words of one of the villagers of Rubelpec: 'We changed our lives, we come together with the Word of God, that is why the mayejak has no importance any more.' In Xalihá and Samox the villagers hardly see any contradictions among religious meanings. In short, if the Q'eqchi'es themselves differentiate at all among religious meanings, then the main difference they make is between customary religion and contemporary Bible-oriented religion, be it evangelical or Catholic. This differentiation is the main reason for distinguishing between a customary and a Bible-oriented principle.

These principles bring together meanings which the Q'eqchi'es themselves attribute to specific occasions. They refer to their own religious discourses. That is why I make a clear difference between the Bible-oriented principle and church-promoted religion. The former points to the Q'eqchi'es own discourses whereas the latter is about what the churches want the Q'eqchi'es to think, which need not coincide. In this section, the two principles will first be distinguished and outlined. Next, I will show how the villagers of the four local communities that have been studied in detail interrelate the two principles in their religious discourse.

4.3.1 *The customary principle*

The first principle that will be discussed is the customary one. First, the customary universe will be mapped and then the ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with the "persons" in this universe will be outlined. Finally, the relevance for social reality of the main "person" in this universe, the Tzuultaq'a, will be discussed.

The customary universe

Q'eqchi'es want to be able to cultivate a piece of land as one of their main activities. This fundamental desire holds true not only in the case of peasants and farmers living in independent villages, but also in the case of those who live in towns. Most of the latter cultivate a piece of land on the outskirts of the town. Moreover, those who have to live on a finca usually have access to a piece of land to grow their maize and beans.

Living in the mountainous landscape of the Q'eqchi' heartland, the Q'eqchi'es feel heavily dependent on the mountain and the valley, *i.e.* the Tzuultaq'a[17], to whom they owe their existence and on whom they are literally located. The mountain gives them all the essential things they need to live. The maize and beans as well as the wood to make fire and to build

[17]. Most of the settlement areas are rather flat. There the idea of the Tzuultaq'a is related both to the central mountains in the Q'eqchi' heartland and to the more general idea of the natural environment.

their houses grow out of the mountain's skin. The precious water comes down the mountain's slopes. The mountain feeds their animals and grows medicinal herbs to cure diseases and so on. To be sure, at the beginning God created everything and in the end God is the source of all life, but in practice and in daily life, it is the Tzuultaq'a on whom the Q'eqchi'es depend for their survival. The Tzuultaq'a is the prominent "person" in customary religion.

These maize cobs, beans, turkeys, trees, water, medicinal herbs and so on are considered to be imbued with life, a spirit originating in the Tzuultaq'a. In the eyes of the Q'eqchi'es there is a vital unit consisting of the mountain, the valley, the land they cultivate, the animals they hold, the plants that grow, the sun, the rain, the wind, the moon and the saints among others, and life is the central "substance" within this unit. Life is inherent in all these elements in contrast to the things that have their origin outside this unit. In this respect, in both Xalihá and in Samox the idea that the origin of "things" and even animals is important is a strong one. It has already been shown that the pasawink have to leave all "alien" objects behind before entering a sacred place to perform their mayejak and the villagers are not supposed to use "alien" animals such as chickens as a sacrifice to the Tzuultaq'a or to 'feed the house'. Moreover, they should not sell their maize, *i.e.* alienate maize from the unit, 'because the maize will cry', as a widow from Xalihá indicated as the reason why she sells hardly any maize. The yo'lek, as described in the cases of Xalihá and Samox, clearly expresses the elements that belong to this unit and are imbued with life.

The clearest examples of "things" imbued with a spirit stemming from the Tzuultaq'a are maize and the house. Both maize and the plants and trees which the Q'eqchi'es use as building materials are imbued with life and grow out of the Tzuultaq'a. Both the Tzuultaq'a and the spirit of maize or the house are addressed in the planting rituals or the wa'tesink re li kab'l ceremonies. The idea of spirits originating in the Tzuultaq'a is expressed also when the Q'eqchi'es ask the Tzuultaq'a not to allow insects or birds to eat too much of their crops. In addition, the Tzuultaq'a can send snakes to bite them if he or she decides to punish them. Moreover, the Tzuultaq'a can send invisible spirits to either help the Q'eqchi'es or cause them harm. In the latter case, the spirit is called *ma'us*. A ma'us incites a Q'eqchi' to have a bad thought or to behave in a reprehensible way which results in illness or accidents.

On the question of whether there are separate good and bad spirits, or whether the same spirit can be both benevolent and malignant depending on the occasion, Q'eqchi'es are not very clear. Consequently, the distinction made by Carlson and Eachus between *xdiosil* and *xwiinkul* referring to spirits does not make much sense.[18] They consider the former to be benevolent

[18]. Carlson, R., Eachus 1978: 50-52. Here the terms xwiinkul and xdiosil are written according to the new spelling rules.

and sacred while the latter are malevolent and profane. Should the Q'eqchi'es not treat them right, then a xdiosil just becomes sad while a xwiinkul becomes angry and punishes the Q'eqchi'es. Indeed, the spirit of maize - a xdiosil - simply fails to grow well whereas the spirit of the house - a xwiinkul - actively inflicts illness or provokes an accident when Q'eqchi'es fail to perform the necessary rituals. Nevertheless spirits of both categories depend on the Tzuultaq'a; they have to be treated in very specific ways and the consequences of not treating the spirits of maize or a house properly - a bad harvest, illness or accidents - are both very negative. In both cases relations with the Tzuultaq'a and the spirit concerned have to be restored.

Saints and ancestors have been incorporated into the customary universe in much the same way. Saints are addressed in the context of yo'leks and, in the case of the women's group Daughters of Santa María in Rubelpec, it has become clear that the women consider Santa María to be capable of providing them with the same things which the pasawink request from the Tzuultaq'a: food, drink, maize and good harvests. Saints play a central role in both the community and the household. Every community has its patron saint who promotes the unity of the community and urges the villagers to pray to him or her and celebrate his or her feast. In much the same way, every house has its saint placed on the altar of the house and frequently requiring attention from the members of the household.

Ancestors are conceived of in a customary way as well. They have to be treated well just like spirits and can cause harm if one does not treat them right. The customary All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day rituals include the idea of giving them food to keep them satisfied in much the same way as food is given to the seed before the planting of maize or to the spirit of the house at the wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals.

In customary religion various important "persons" are addressed, but the Tzuultaq'a remains the central "person". According to Qawa' Bex and several other pasawink, the Tzuultaq'a is a many-sided "person". The Tzuultaq'a can be male or female and has a Spanish and a Q'eqchi' name. For example, one of the central Tzuultaq'as is called Santa María Itzam and is female. Other important Tzuultaq'as such as San Pablo Xucaneb' are regarded as male. The Tzuultaq'a is a mountain, but he or she can be addressed and encountered in special places such as a cave, a river or the top of the mountain.

Qawa' Bex pointed out that every mountain has its own name and thus every mountain is a distinctive Tzuultaq'a with its own personality. However the idea of a single Tzuultaq'a encompassing the whole Q'eqchi' region is alive as well. This distinction between a single all-encompassing Tzuultaq'a and a particular Tzuultaq'a next to other Tzuultaq'as is demonstrated by the fact that at a mayejak in Samox and Xalihá, pasawink go to both the particular local mountains and to several of the central thirteen Tzuultaq'as. These thirteen are sacred places where the single general Tzuultaq'a is to be addressed. The respondents often expressed

themselves in both singular and plural terms when talking about the Tzuultaq'a as is exemplified by the following quote from a pasawink in Samox:

> 'The mountains are one person with various names. If we address only one of them the others become jealous. We have to pay attention to all the mountains we know.'

The most famous of these thirteen are San Pablo Xucaneb' south of San Juan Chamelco, Qana' Itzam and Qawa' Siyab' (Lady Itzam and Lord Siyab') between Cahabón and Lanquín, Qawa' Kojaj (Lord Kojaj) between San Pedro Carchá and Campur, the Calvary mountain in Cobán, Qawa' Raxon Tzunqin (Lord Raxon Tzunqin) south of the Polochic river and Chi Ixim in Tactic (see Map 2).

Both the central and the local Tzuultaq'as symbolize power: the control of the land and of all who dwell upon it. In this sense several respondents in Xalihá compared the Tzuultaq'a with a *patrón, i.e.* a landlord. It has to be stressed, though, that when the respondents used this metaphor, it was limited to these specific meanings. The comparison between a landlord and the Tzuultaq'a should not be pushed too far as Wilson[19] seems to be doing. He holds that the image which the Q'eqchi'es developed of the Tzuultaq'a after the introduction of the coffee plantations adopted characteristics of German landlords:

> 'Since both are authority figures and owners of the land, the *personas* of the mountain spirits and plantation landlords are merged to a degree.'

However, almost none of my respondents consider the Tzuultaq'a to be arbitrary, bad tempered or cruel, characteristics usually attributed to German landowners. According to my respondents he or she is very trustworthy and there is no need to fear the Tzuultaq'a.

Of course the Tzuultaq'a is relevant in the rural context. In the customary universe of town dwellers, saints, spirits and ancestors occupy a special place and the Tzuultaq'a has not the same prominence as in the case of rural Q'eqchi'es. They pray to saints and ancestors and ask them for the things they need. Bad spirits are counteracted by praying to God, not so much to the Tzuultaq'a.

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[19]. Wilson 1993: 127; Wilson 1995: 57-58.

The Q'eqchi'es dealing with customary "persons"

Customary religion is about crucial and practical aspects of daily life: a good harvest, the lives of their animals, protection from illness and accidents and against disasters such as drought, plagues and heavy rainfall as well as from conflicts within the household and the local community, living in peace with other communities etc. The Q'eqchi'es try to secure these things by entering into an almost tangible and practical "contract" with the important "persons" in their universe, the Tzuultaq'a in particular.

The part of the contract which the Q'eqchi'es are supposed to observe consists of three elements. First, they show their respect towards the Tzuultaq'a and other "persons" by addressing them and mentioning their names. Secondly, they sacrifice part of what they have received from the Tzuultaq'a such as cocoa, maize and a turkey as well as precious objects and materials such as candles and copal pom. Thirdly, they thank the Tzuultaq'a and the others for what they have received and ask for the things they will need again in the future.

These three elements constitute the standard elements of almost all the customary rituals as outlined above. In the eyes of the Q'eqchi'es, especially those of Xalihá and Samox, this contract is strictly reciprocal: if they comply with their obligations, the Tzuultaq'a will reward them with abundance and protection. Several pasawink in Samox and Xalihá related the quantity and quality of their harvests directly to the seriousness with which the villagers perform their customary rituals. One of them told me: 'If we do not do our mayejak our crops will not grow'.

This reciprocal character also means that when the Q'eqchi'es do not perform the necessary rituals, the Tzuultaq'a and the other "persons" will punish them severely. They do so, for instance, by telling snakes to bite them, causing illness or accidents, ordering the rain, the wind or the sun to destroy their harvest, sending animals to eat their crops, issuing a spirit to cause them harm etc. A good harvest, protection from plagues and the health of the Q'eqchi'es all depend on good relations with the Tzuultaq'a. A villager of Samox told me that a few years ago, a fellow villager did not perform his mayejak and the Tzuultaq'a ordered the wind to destroy his maize crop. Diseases such as 'seen by the mountain' (rilomil tzuul) and 'spirit loss' (xiw) are directly attributable to the Tzuultaq'a becoming angry.

However, the Tzuultaq'a does not strike at once; he or she first issues a warning to the Q'eqchi'es. Several respondents said that the Tzuultaq'a does so by appearing in a dream of one of the pasawink in the shape of an old man or woman, looking sad, disappointed or angry. The villagers readily know why. The Tzuultaq'a can also appear in a dream just to help them. One of the respondents in Samox told me that he dreamt of a certain plant. The day after, he looked for this plant, found it and gave it to a sick woman in the village. After using the plant she recovered quickly. The dream was an advice offered by the Tzuultaq'a. In any case appearances in a

dream are the only direct religious experiences the Q'eqchi'es have of the Tzuultaq'a. Usually they know whether the Tzuultaq'a is benevolent or not by the quality and quantity of their harvest, the appearance or absence of illness and so on.

Customary rituals are performed both by the individual households and by the community as a whole, but the balance tips towards the communitarian side. The patron saint's feast is the outstanding symbol of the unity of the community. The community mayejak requires the participation of all its members. Even in the case of rituals performed at the household level such as the 'house feeding' rituals and the planting rituals, friends, relatives and other villagers are invited to take part and have a meal together. This meal is the clearest expression of the notion that life is reproduced in a communitarian way. Food as the source of life is consumed together. In the planting rituals this communitarian character is emphasized by group-wise planting and by the fact that the man of the household represents the community when performing these rituals. Several pasawink told me that the Tzuultaq'a has to be addressed in a communitarian way which presupposes that the community remains united.[20]

The Tzuultaq'a and other powerful "persons" in the universe are not the only "persons" who must be dealt with in very specific ways. Similarly to the wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals and planting rituals which express a set of rules designed to deal with the spirit of the house and the maize respectively, there are rules governing the way of handling every "object" that has a spirit. Cabarrús and Carlson and Eachus give many examples of these rules[21], but whether the Q'eqchi'es actually take all of them seriously remains open to question.

The Tzuultaq'a and social reality

Even when only some of these rules are present in the minds of most of the Q'eqchi'es, they would not find it easy to observe all the rules they know. The Salesian priests especially emphasize that customary religion is characterized by fear and submission to nature. Carlson and Eachus write that the 'beings' in the universe of the Q'eqchi'es are very sensitive and easily offended.[22] Of course the Q'eqchi'es live in circumstances in which they depend heavily on natural forces and are influenced by actors and

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[20]. To be sure, whether the patron saint and the Tzuultaq'a actually play a role in promoting the unity and harmony of the local Q'eqchi' communities, is hard to say. In any case, no community that I studied in detail was free from serious internal conflicts and rivalries between hamlets or families. It is not my aim to confirm any structural-functionalist thesis à la Durkheim in this respect.

[21]. Carlson, Eachus 1978: 52-62; Cabarrús 1979: 50.

[22]. Carlson, Eachus 1978: 41.

agencies that are not very friendly to them, to say the least.[23] They are unable to control these forces, actors and agencies so a certain sense of fear and uncertainty may be expected. In the words of one of the respondents: 'That nothing may happen to us, because we do not know'. The opportunity for individual prayer after the Communion during the Mass, the prayers said by individual Q'eqchi'es at the start of a yo'lek as well as the emotional utterances during the processions of the Hermandad del Calvario in Cobán, all these express the difficulties which many Q'eqchi'es have to face in reproducing their material and social existence.

Be that as it may, it is precisely customary religion which presents excellent ways of allowing the Q'eqchi'es not only to express their anxieties but also to make sense of an uncertain situation brought about by the dependency on nature. Nature is conceived in terms of "persons" and through customary rituals, the Q'eqchi'es deal with these "persons" and enter into a perfect reciprocal contract. Customary religion allows disasters, bad harvests and diseases to be interpreted as a punishment handed out by the Tzuultaq'a because the Q'eqchi'es did not comply with their part of the contract;[24] even when they perform the necessary rituals, their dedication or devotion may be insufficient. This way of conceiving their relations with nature makes the Q'eqchi'es appear as active and decisive actors while the natural surroundings are symbolically transformed into a reactive counterpart that can be trusted and dealt with. The image which the Q'eqchi'es have constructed of the Tzuultaq'a allows them to "solve" their dependency on the arbitrary natural surroundings in a symbolic way: they convert nature into something that depends on them rather than the other way around, *i.e.* on their compliance with the contract they have with the Tzuultaq'a.

The drought which threatened the crops of the villagers in Chaabilchoch a year before my fieldwork causing a temporary revival of the community mayejak, clearly exemplifies the capacity of customary religion to make sense of situations of need. Despite the fact that the community mayejak had been lost for years, they went back to this customary practice to seek a solution to the problems thrown up by nature.

Customary religion is intimately related to the natural surroundings of the Q'eqchi'es and thus to their agricultural activities. The relevance of the mayejak, planting rituals and b'antioxink practices to the cultivation of maize is obvious. Moreover customary practices and meanings are especially relevant to and stress the importance of those agricultural activities that belong to the subsistence sphere: crops and animals that are produced and

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[23]. See the army influence outlined in Chapter Two and the role of economic intervening actors and agencies dealt with in the next chapter.

[24]. Jon Schackt provides an excellent example of the revival of mayejak rituals in a Belizean Q'eqchi' village after it was struck by famine and a hurricane, which were interpreted as a result of the wrath of the Tzuultaq'a: Schackt 1984: 16-29.

consumed within the household (see Chapter Seven). Customary religion is not relevant to activities oriented towards the market or cash crops which do not instil in the Q'eqchi'es the need to perform customary rituals.

In short, customary religion is about vital aspects of the daily life of the Q'eqchi'es. It is very practical and tangible, involves few abstract notions, allows the Q'eqchi'es to make sense of the material situation in which they find themselves, and has special relevance for their subsistence agriculture.

4.3.2. *The Bible-oriented principle*

The religious discourse of the Q'eqchi'es is not monopolized by the customary principle. There is another important religious principle which "organizes" this discourse and may be called Bible-oriented because it focuses on God and His Word. This principle has mainly been constructed on basis of expressions and statements by "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es, not by outside religious specialists.

No one else but God

The Bible-oriented principle portrays God as the only relevant and omnipotent "person" in the universe. To be sure, God has created nature, but nature is neither personified nor imbued with life in the way that man is. This life has been granted to man and, in the end, it will return to God. In the meantime man has to comply with His demands. God wants man to pray frequently to Him and believe in Him, to listen to His Word, to love and worship Him, to be loyal to the church and to live according to His moral demands.

The main moral demands mentioned by the respondents are those that confirm the existing division of labour within the household, the need to respect the other members of the household and the local and church community. They must love their neighbour and not envy anyone, abstain from drinking and quarrelling and lead an ordered life. They have to marry, give a good example to their children and other members of the community and not desire other men or women. Catholics and evangelicals mention exactly the same things when asked what God wants them to do, and the moral demands coincide perfectly with the customary requirement of unity when they present themselves to the Tzuultaq'a.

Nevertheless, the emphasis of God's demands is different. These are much more rooted in individual responsibility. It is primarily the individual who addresses God and He calls on the Q'eqchi'es to comply individually with His demands. In the words of one villager of Rubelpec: 'God touched my heart. I felt happiness when I entered the [Nazarene - hs] church, it made me examine my conscience'. God is able to do good things to individuals who have changed their lives. The main function of the church

community is to stimulate the individual to look after his or her relations with God.

About what God will do when an individual obeys His wishes my respondents are unanimous: God will show Himself to be benevolent and will provide them with 'the good things'. However, these 'good things' are not so much related to specific things which the Q'eqchi'es ask of Him at particular moments, such as when they address the Tzuultaq'a and ask for a good harvest or protection during customary practices. Referring to the things that are provided by God, my respondents mentioned rather abstract matters such as 'the blessings of God' or their general well-being and destiny.

Whether God would actually punish them in case the Q'eqchi'es did not obey Him is not clear. On the one hand God sometimes does punish them. Some respondents in Chaabilchoch told me the story of a minister who fell in love with a fifteen year old girl and changed his way of life. He went to the neighbouring town of Chajmaïc to get drunk and there he died. According to these respondents, this was a concrete proof of the wrath of God. In other communities, villagers related similar stories.

On the other hand several respondents said that God does not punish them: either He does so only after death or at the end of times, or He forgives them 'because He loves both the believer and the drunkard'. What are the conditions which will lead Him to forgive or to punish remains unclear. One of the evangelicals said on this issue: 'God will have His reasons although we do not understand them'. As a consequence of this uncertainty as to whether God will punish them when they fail to comply with His demands, relations with God are not strictly reciprocal.

The idea of reciprocal relations is also undermined by the view, expressed by several respondents, that they very often commit a sin without being aware of it and are later punished by God: 'We often do not remember that we fail in the eyes of God.' 'We have to pray to God on our knees and ask Him to forgive the sins we commit all the time.' These respondents do not have a very positive view of themselves either: 'We do not know anything, we are sinners'. As a result of the important role which moral behaviour plays in relations with God, the concept of "sin" and the need to "obey" and to ask for "forgiveness" are closely linked to God. Add to this the unpredictable character of God's wrath and punishment, and the need to fear God becomes obvious.[25] The respondents in Xalihá who compared the Tzuultaq'a with a large landowner used the same metaphor to refer to God, but in this case they emphasized His much more authoritarian

[25]. Cabarrús emphasizes the context of fear created by all the things God requires the Q'eqchi'es to do which makes it impossible to avoid committing sins. He cites a Q'eqchi' who stressed that everything is sin and that life is just like a prison: one can do almost anything without becoming guilty of sins. Cabarrús 1979: 37-38.

character: 'God is like a patrón. If we do not work for Him He gets angry. He can punish us because of our sins. He watches our sins.'

Not surprisingly, among the Q'eqchi'es who have such a dark view of themselves and their relations with God, there are some who have experienced serious hardship. One of them had recently lost all his cattle and land in the area of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas because of guerrilla threats. Among those who stress that God is benevolent and that He does not punish them are the instructors, the ministro and most of the evangelicals in Rubelpec. The influence of church-promoted discourse, whether evangelical or Salesian, becomes clear in their statements.

An apparent difference between Catholic and evangelical respondents is the fact that evangelicals stress that dream appearances are important to them. This shows a remarkable continuity with the role of dream appearances in customary religion. However in the case of the evangelicals, only God, Christ or the Holy Spirit appear in their dreams. Almost all the evangelicals gave account of stories of such dream appearances.

In short, relations with God have a rather individual, moral, abstract and not strictly reciprocal character. In this respect relations with God differ considerably from the tangible "contract" which the Q'eqchi'es have developed with the Tzuultaq'a in accordance with the customary principle.[26] Interestingly, the tangible and practical character of relations with the Tzuultaq'a and the relatively abstract and not strictly reciprocal nature of relations with God coincide with the fact that the Tzuultaq'a and most of the customary "persons" have both a physical and a spiritual appearance. In contrast, the Bible-oriented principle makes a strict distinction between visible persons and the only invisible One. Cabarrús quotes a Q'eqchi' who makes a distinction between God being far away or 'in the clouds' on the one hand, and the Tzuultaq'a, the 'god of the tangible', on the other.[27]

God and social reality

The tangible character of the Tzuultaq'a and the rather abstract nature of God are related to important differences in the ways in which the two principles are linked to social reality and nature. The customary principle is directly related to nature and its prominent rituals are focused on the agricultural cycle of subsistence crops, mainly maize. The Bible-oriented principle has no such direct link to any specific economic activity and is

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[26]. Karl Sapper holds that in his time - the end of the previous century - the Q'eqchi'es had a rather concrete view of God. They related Him to a specific territory (the territory effectively controlled by the whites) and in their eyes God preferred the whites: Sapper 1904: 462, 467. At present, God has lost this territorial link and both whites, aj Kastii and Q'eqchi'es are considered as His children. God has become rather abstract in this respect.

[27]. *El dios de lo concreto*: Cabarrús 1979: 41-42.

mainly relevant to the life-cycle of individual Q'eqchi'es, as expressed in the baptism and marriage rituals. In addition, because of the abstract and not strictly reciprocal relations with God the Bible-oriented principle does not have the same capacity to symbolically "solve" problems of uncertainty and dependence on nature and specific agricultural activities as the customary principle.

Nevertheless, the Bible-oriented principle does allow the Q'eqchi'es to turn to God in order to improve their general well-being. This is especially important to those who spend a lot of time and depend economically on non-agricultural activities whereas the Tzuultaq'a is irrelevant to these activities. This relevance of the Bible-oriented principle partly explains the predominant role of God in the community of Rubelpec, where an estimated 42 households have someone who earns a living as a merchant and where an estimated 69 households have a member who works as wage labourer outside the community for some time every year (the total number of households is 125). The importance of these non-agricultural activities or market-oriented agricultural activities - some of the waged workers work as day-labourers in the coffee and cardamom harvest of other Q'eqchi'es - suggests that in the case of Rubelpec, problems of uncertainty are more likely to be "solved" symbolically in relation to God.

The relevance of the Bible-oriented principle to economic life does not stop here. It has been shown above that Bible-oriented meanings and practices are emphasized in the case of a conversion to an evangelical church or a decision to become a catechist in Salesian-run parishes, and that such a conversion or decision can serve as a stimulus to put one's life in order, to solve immediate problems and to lead an industrious life. In the Salesian-run parishes, Q'eqchi' respondents attributed to God the idea that He approves of efforts by the Q'eqchi'es to improve their economic performance. In the case of the evangelicals, this legitimation is even more pronounced. Evangelical respondents told me that God not only requires them to follow His moral demands, He also urges them to work hard and to improve their economic life. In the words of one of the evangelical respondents:

> 'We pray both to God and Jesus Christ. If someone does his *k'anjel* well he will receive the blessings of God. Good *k'anjel* brings about the favours of God.'

Interestingly, he used the word *k'anjel* which in Q'eqchi' has the general meaning of 'effort'. It refers both to an effort in terms of moral behaviour and in relation to work and economic activity. Enjoying economic success can be interpreted as a token of the blessing of God and working hard results in obtaining favours from God. Here we have a clear religious stimulus to improving one's economic performance and the Bible-oriented principle implies no objection to doing so through market integration.

The Bible-oriented principle not only encourages the evangelicals to improve their economic conditions but evangelical respondents from various communities said that they are also supposed to support the state. They said that once a week, they pray for the president, the army and for those who are responsible for the municipal government, 'that they may do their work well'. Another respondent said:

> 'It is all right to obey the law of God and the law of the constitution and the decrees of the municipality. We have to pray to God so that the violence may stop.'

However this ideological statement should not be interpreted as explicit political support for specific parties or political actors; rather, it expresses the wish that these potentially dangerous actors and institutions will not harm them or will just leave them alone. Moreover Bible-oriented religion can easily become associated with an image of God as a promoter of social justice and human rights, which has quite opposite ideological connotations. Ideological consistency is the Q'eqchi'es' primary concern.

4.3.3 *Relations between both principles*

On the one hand, these two principles which organize the religious discourse of the Q'eqchi'es not only put emphasis on different issues but contradict each other in several aspects. For example is nature, in the end, to be conceived of as personalized or not? Is God the only transcendent "person" or is the universe inhabited by several "persons" that have a spiritual character such as the sun, the moon, the Tzuultaq'a, the saints, the spirits, the ancestors and so on? Is religion mainly a matter for individuals or for the local community? On the other hand, almost all of the communities and individual households I studied expressed the central meanings of both principles in their answers to my questions.

The clue to this paradox is to be found in three basic aspects of the Q'eqchi'es way of dealing with their religion. First, although several respondents do make a distinction between some customary meanings and practices and Bible-oriented ones, most of the respondents are not very interested in trying to work out a unified and coherent discourse to eliminate internal contradictions. They usually evade contradictions and when faced with questions pointing to inconsistencies, they often responded by saying: *'Chi junil'* ('It is all the same'). In speaking about these matters, they forged a unity in their discourse by mentioning all the important "persons" in their universe and expressing the various meanings attached to these "persons" in much the same way that the pasawink addresses all "persons" in the universe at a yo'lek. The desire to create a harmony of all these "persons" in the universe and to allow them a place in this universe is their principal explicit way of creating unity of discourse. The fact that

aspects of these meanings may be inconsistent does not bother them very much. Only those who had been working closely with a Salesian priest and a minister told me that they explicitly took a position on the Bible-oriented side stressing their rejection of customary meanings.

Secondly, the Q'eqchi'es may sometimes express the central meanings of the two principles, but never at the same moment or occasion. The lack of a strong effort to create a single universal or permanently valid discourse raises the possibility that each particular moment or occasion determines the principle which will be relevant and thus expressed through religious practices at that time or occasion. Customary meanings are relevant in relation to the moments and occasions when the customary rituals already mentioned are performed while Bible-oriented meanings become apparent in the context of church-promoted practices. Practices and meanings have an occasion-specific character.

Nevertheless, the interviews I conducted in the individual households usually took place outside the context of a specific ritual or occasion. This setting allowed me to ask questions which referred not only to specific practices and related meanings but to general images such as the ones the Q'eqchi'es have constructed of God, the Tzuultaq'a and other "persons" as well. This research in four local communities has yielded the conclusion that for some communities or individual Q'eqchi'es, one principle is dominant and the other is rather pushed into the background. The third way in which the Q'eqchi'es "reconcile" the two principles in their discourse is by modifying the subordinate principle in order to make it as compatible as possible with the dominant one; however its basic meanings remain valid. In Xalihá and Samox, the customary principle dominates whereas in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec it is the Bible-oriented one which governs the religious discourse. However in each village, the dominant principle does not rule out the other principle, it simply induces the villagers to modify the other. How these relations between the dominant and the subordinated principle work out in these villages will be discussed next.

4.3.4 *The customary principle dominating in Xalihá and Samox*

In Samox and Xalihá both principles are relevant because almost all of the parish-promoted and customary practices outlined above are performed and the villagers expressed the Bible-oriented or customary meanings related to these practices. In both communities only a few villagers do not participate actively in both customary and parish-promoted practices. In Samox, only the sacrament and preparation of marriage is not observed by all while in Xalihá, Christmas and the Holy Week receive little attention and the villagers of these two communities are not unanimous about some of the customary meanings associated with the rituals performed on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. There is remarkably little variation between the various households in these villages in terms of religious practices and

meanings. This holds true for catechists as well as for chinames and pasawink, and in Samox there is even no distinction at all between the Q'eqchi' majority and the minority of Poqomchi' origin in this respect.

In Samox, there is even a revival of customary practices going on. The pasawink of Samox emphasized that they have not always performed customary rituals. They said that 'in the old days', the villagers would plant just a little maize and that the Tzuultaq'a rewarded them with generous harvests. During the first half of the 1980s they began to neglect customary rituals and the harvest has been diminishing ever since. The villagers did not celebrate their mayejak: 'We only celebrated the Mass and the pasawink had no voice'. The priest at that time 'brought us the New Testament and told us that doing the mayejak makes no sense'.

Then, some six years ago, the village was hit by a serious drought and the crops were lost. Some young men took the initiative of starting with their mayejak again. They went to the mountains nearby to do their mayejak and it started to rain. After that the cardamom and coffee harvests began to be affected by disease. One pasawink told me:

> 'Perhaps because of a neglect on our part, perhaps because we did not do the penance with much enthusiasm, because we lost the devotion to sacrifice. The harvest was very poor, that is why the pasawink started to come together in Telemán. The reason for the problems with the bad harvest exists within ourselves.'

With these words the pasawink expressed the intricate relationship between a good harvest and customary practices focusing on the Tzuultaq'a. Moreover the new Dominican priests 'took up the mayejak again'. From that time on, the villagers have been performing their mayejak regularly.

In short, the revival of customary rituals and meanings in the last five years is related, first of all, to the capacity of customary religion to make sense of a problematic situation related to nature. Secondly, the changing pastoral policy of the parish has been a crucial factor as well: five years ago it stimulated the pasawink to start their meetings again and legitimized their efforts to revive customary religion.

The strong position of customary religion in both communities is partly responsible for the fact that many religious practices and meanings have an articulated character: they combine parish-promoted practices and Bible-oriented meanings with customary practices and meanings. For example when the procession entered the house of Qawa' Bex at the feast of the patron saint in Xalihá, he emphasized that the customs have their origin in God, and the yo'lek as it is practised there is preceded by several Lord's Prayers and Hail Marys. Christmas and the Holy Week in Samox are complemented by mayejak rituals during which the Tzuultaq'a is addressed. Of course, the articulated character of many practices in these communities

is made possible thanks to an explicit permission granted by the priests who work with these communities.

Even more, the customary principle dominates the religious discourse in these two communities as evidenced by the fact that several parish-promoted practices receive customary meanings. For example at the Christmas and the Holy Week rituals in Samox, saints such as Santa María, San José and Jesus Nazareno take centre stage instead of the official remembrance of the birth, resurrection or even the death of Christ. The transformation of the Black Christ of Esquipulas into a patron saint in Xalihá as well as the importance of customary rituals and meanings at the All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day in both communities show the same dominance of the customary principle. Both communities are very committed to customary practices and meanings.

God, the Tzuultaq'a and other "persons"

The presence of both principles in the religious discourse of the villagers of Xalihá and Samox is not only shown at the level of specific rituals and related meanings. Both God - the central "person" of the Bible-oriented principle - and the Tzuultaq'a, the sun, the rain, the moon, the wind, the saints, the ancestors, the spirits etc. - the central "persons" of the customary principle - are present in their universe and most of the meanings outlined earlier are attached to them. However, the very fact itself that God is not alone in this universe, something which contradicts the Bible-oriented principle, points to the importance of the customary principle.

Indeed, the customary principle dominates the villagers' view of God, the Tzuultaq'a and the other "persons". On the relations between God and the Tzuultaq'a, one of the villagers of Xalihá told me:

> 'God has created everything including the mountains. He looks after the mountains as if they were His animals, and the mountains take care of us.'

In the eyes of the villagers of Samox and Xalihá, the Tzuultaq'a appears as an intermediary between God and themselves. To be sure, God is the greatest and is the creator of everything, but in daily life the villagers deal primarily with the Tzuultaq'a. One respondent stressed the importance of the Tzuultaq'a by saying: 'We are children of the mountain'. Still another went as far as to say that 'the Word of God is there to enrich our ways of addressing the Tzuultaq'a'. The Tzuultaq'a even appears as the one who commands the rain, the wind, the moon, the sun and other "persons". The practical character of their relations with the Tzuultaq'a is reflected by the fact that to the villagers, the nearby mountains on which they actually live, are more important to them than the central or more distant ones.

The dominance of the customary principle is also expressed in the image of God which the villagers of Samox and Xalihá have constructed. To be sure, in their eyes, God wants them to worship Him, to listen to His Word, to be loyal to the church and to obey His moral demands: the usual Bible-oriented meanings. However in line with a customary logic, the villagers also ask Him for practical things such as a good harvest, protection from illness and disease, animals growing well and so on. Moreover the villagers' relations with God are as reciprocal as their "contract" with the Tzuultaq'a and it is primarily the community which enters into contact with God. Individual relations with God are less important. However the villagers try to secure these necessary things mainly in their "contract" with the Tzuultaq'a, their relations with God having a secondary importance in this respect.

In short, in Samox and Xalihá both principles are relevant to the specific practices to which they are related, but the images which the villagers have created of the "persons" in their universe and of their relations with these persons show a predominantly practical character in which the Tzuultaq'a is central. In these images, the customary principle dominates.

The relations between the villagers and the Tzuultaq'a are almost the same in Samox and Xalihá. An important difference is that at the mayejak ceremonies, the pasawink of Samox not only ask for a good harvest of food crops, they explicitly ask for a good harvest of cardamom and coffee, their two main cash crops, and they demand 'that they may earn their pennies'. They not only refer to products that belong to the subsistence sphere, they explicitly ask for a good performance in market-oriented production as well. In the words of some of the respondents:

> 'Both cardamom and maize serve us, the Tzuultaq'a approves of both. Maize is for food, cardamom is for earning money to buy our clothes. To the Tzuultaq'a it is the same, but maize is celebrated more.'

Another villager from Samox told me that the Tzuultaq'a advised him to work as a merchant and that the Tzuultaq'a helps him to achieve this. The Tzuultaq'a makes no objection either to the villagers using chemical fertilizers: 'Mayejak is fertilizer, but the Tzuultaq'a allows the chemical one as well'. In short, the strong identification of the Tzuultaq'a with the subsistence sphere in Xalihá has no parallel in Samox. There, the villagers have constructed an image of the Tzuultaq'a which is relevant and favourable to both subsistence and cash crop production. Not surprisingly, the villagers of Samox are much more integrated into the market economy than their fellow Q'eqchi'es of Xalihá (see Chapter Seven).

However this does not mean that the Tzuultaq'a is indifferent to these categories of crops and products. First, he or she does not accept as sacrifice things that do not originate in the local environment. All the things that are

to be sacrificed - cocoa, turkey meat, copal pom and candles - do have their origin in the local environment. A chicken is not accepted and a turkey that has been bought will not do either in Samox.

Secondly, maize and other food crops continue to be special to the villagers of Samox. Planting and b'antioxink rituals are performed only at the time of planting maize, not when planting cash crops such as cardamom or coffee. Moreover such cash crops may depend on the Tzuultaq'a as well, but the villagers of Samox do not think that these crops are imbued with a spirit.

In short, market integration and the production of cash crops do not contradict the meanings which the villagers have constructed around the Tzuultaq'a and various crops. However, these meanings do encourage the villagers to go on cultivating maize and cling to the notion that this food crop is of special importance.

Customs losing ground?

The customary principle is dominant in Samox and Xalihá, but is there anything to say about its historical perspectives? Customary practices and meanings are gaining ground in Samox according to several respondents. In Xalihá several villagers have complained about a supposed loss of customs. However when asked which customs have been lost, they told me they did not know because only a few pasawink who have passed away knew these customs. Qawa' Bex complained about a lack of devotion on the part of the youth: they practice the customs but not very sincerely and without wanting to learn their meanings. He blames the school for alienating the youth from customary religion.

However my interviews do not confirm the idea that the youth may be losing interest in customs. They do not perform fewer customary practices nor do they express fewer customary meanings than the older villagers. In any case the villagers are very concerned about the future of customary religion. This concern in itself indicates that they consider customary religion to have an important role to play in their lives.

4.3.5 *The Bible-oriented principle dominating in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec*

In contrast to Xalihá and Samox customary religion exists only marginally in Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch, at least so I thought on my first visits to these communities. Several times, I tried to raise the issue of customary rituals at a meeting of catechists and other Catholics in Chaabilchoch but this only provoked laughter. This was obviously not something that could be discussed and the answers they gave suggested that almost no customary rituals were practised. Because of this experience I was very surprised to find that in private, even catechists were willing to admit that they perform quite a few customary practices and that they believe in many customary

meanings. It was the Chaabilchoch ministro himself who told me in private[28]:

> 'My parents used to pray mentioning the mountains of Qawa' Xucaneb', Qana' Itzam and Qawa' Kojaj. Before planting their maize my parents would go to the mountains. In those days the land gave good harvests, now much less. Now the land is not very fertile any more *because we do not go to the mountains any more.*'[29]

The fact that they no longer go to the mountains appears as one of the explanations of why the land provides poorer crops: a logic that touches the heart of customary religion. Actually in Chaabilchoch, two catechists join the group which performs the mayejak in Cobán, Cojaj and Tactic, one of them even directed this mayejak in 1992. The catechists I interviewed in Chaabilchoch perform customary planting, b'antioxink and All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day rituals; almost all of them believe that the mountains are alive and address them during their planting rituals. Only wa'tesink re li kab'l rituals receive little attention by catechists in Chaabilchoch.

In Rubelpec a similar picture emerges with respect to the catechists and customary rituals. Almost all the catechists perform the customary rituals, as outlined in the previous section, except for the individual mayejak visits to some of the central Tzuultaq'as. In Rubelpec only the ministro and the two instructors I interviewed do not perform most of the customary rituals, but they continue their planting and b'antioxink rituals.

The contradiction between public and private statements suggests that in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, there is a difference between, on the one hand, a public level dominated by the church and the catechists leading parish-promoted practices and, on the other hand, a private or household level on which even catechists may practice customary rituals and express customary meanings. They are able tc combine these two levels as long as the priest does not attack customary practices openly and as long as customary practices do not interfere with the meanings and practices they are supposed to promote as catechists.

This distinction between a public and a private or household level makes sense when analyzing religious practices and meanings in these two communities. In Samox and Xalihá it does not make sense because the

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[28]. Of course, talking to me as an outsider is not just a private matter. Within the protection of their own house the villagers told me about customary practices that are celebrated at the level of the household or of several households together and about customary meanings, something they were not willing to admit in meetings with other villagers.

[29]. Of course, italics are mine.

villagers there perform both parish-promoted and customary practices at both the community and household levels.

The public level

In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec the public level is almost exclusively dominated by parish-promoted and evangelical practices and Bible-oriented meanings. Religious meetings in which a considerable part of the local community participates consist of either the evangelical services and campaigns or the celebrations of the Word and the Masses. All except a small minority participate in these practices. The meanings expressed at these practices are Bible-oriented; respondents in both communities told me that on these occasions, hardly ever is a reference made to customary meanings.

All this is not to say that customary practices do not now nor have ever had a place on the public level. In Chaabilchoch the patron saint's feast just lingers on but in Rubelpec, the chinames at least pay attention to San Esteban's day. However the other community members do not participate and the chinames were reluctant to admit that they actually address the saints on this day.

The mayejak, the other most important customary ritual performed at the public level, is only performed by individual households in Rubelpec; in Chaabilchoch only a small group visits the central mountains without the support of the community. In Chaabilchoch the mayejak used to be celebrated in a comprehensive way as an activity of the whole community, but now the youngsters[30] in particular as well as the evangelicals reject it. Some respondents related the loss of the community mayejak to the fact that the pasawink who used to direct it have died and that the others 'do not know the mountains'. This personal relationship between some pasawink and the mountains which enables them to talk about the mountains and to know their names is important to the mayejak rituals. Another crucial factor to which several respondents referred concerning the fate of the community mayejak in Chaabilchoch is the negative influence of the priest.

Some church-promoted practices that are performed in public by the Catholics in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec may include customary aspects such as the posadas and processions at Christmas and the Holy Week, or even baptism, wedding and funeral practices. However, these aspects express meanings which do not contradict the basic Bible-oriented meanings attributed to these church-promoted practices.

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[30]. The average age of those who once in a while visit some of the central mountains is considerably higher than the average age of those who do not do so.

The private level

While the most important customary practices may have been lost at the public level in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, the private or household level presents a very different picture. The occasions on which customary rituals focusing on the individual households are performed, *i.e.* the clearing of the land, the planting and harvesting of maize and the inauguration of a new house, receive ritual attention on the part of almost all the villagers. Only in Chaabilchoch is there is a minority of villagers who do not pay attention to the harvesting of maize or the inauguration of a new house. Moreover everyone except this minority asks for the things that are relevant to that occasion such as a good harvest, protection from accidents and snake-bites and permission to cultivate the land. The fact that these occasions apparently require ritual attention and that they ask for essential things which they need to survive or to earn their living shows that essential aspects of the customary principle are maintained in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec. This holds true in the case of both Catholics and evangelicals.

Moreover, most of the respondents perform customary practices at these moments. However, as to what the villagers actually do on these occasions or whom they address, there is a wide variety of practices among the individual households of both communities. This variety in itself shows the relatively individualized nature of religion in both communities. As to the practices they perform, the variety goes from comprehensive customary rituals to customary rituals which leave out some of the most controversial elements, to substitution practices, and finally to only some prayers on these occasions. Concerning those whom the villagers address, some pray only to God while others include the Tzuultaq'a as well. Some of the villagers mention only some of the central Tzuultaq'as while others refer to some of the nearby mountains as well. Some address the sun, the moon, the wind and the rain personally while others ask God and/or the Tzuultaq'a to provide them with enough sunshine, air and water to let their crops grow well. Some are convinced that the seed of maize and the house are imbued with an important spirit while others explicitly reject this idea.

A considerable number of respondents do not perform customary rituals in a comprehensive way and not all are convinced of the importance of the Tzuultaq'a (both the central and nearby ones), of the spirits of maize and the house, and of the need to address the sun, the moon, the wind and the rain; this constitutes a departure from the customary principle. Moreover, the customary practices and meanings that are left behind are replaced by Bible-oriented ones, which indicates that the Bible-oriented principle is not only dominant at the public level but it also exerts its influence on customary rituals at the private or household level.

These differences in terms of practices and "persons" to be addressed do not coincide with ecclesiastical distinctions. On the one hand there are a few evangelicals who perform customary rituals and who consider the

Tzuultaq'a to be alive and the house to be imbued with a spirit. On the other hand there is a small group of Catholics in both communities who perform hardly any customary practices and who reject crucial customary meanings. Nevertheless based on the analysis of customary practices in the previous section, two general conclusions are justified. First, the Catholics who wish to pay ritual attention to these occasions in both communities perform customary practices, though some leave out the most controversial aspects, and the majority of them address the Tzuultaq'a next to God.

Secondly, in general the evangelicals in both communities perform substitution practices on these occasions and almost all of them address God exclusively. My concept of substitution practices is in line with what is referred to in the literature as one of the ways in which evangelical churches deal with indigenous practices.[31] Based on his fieldwork with the Nazarene church in Alta Verapaz, Samandú distinguishes three strategies applied by evangelical churches to indigenous cultures: eradication, agreement[32] and substitution.

According to Samandú, those aspects of indigenous cultures that contradict essential elements of the official discourse and moral requirements of these churches are fiercely attacked. Referring to the Q'eqchi'es, Samandú mentions all that is related to the saints, the sacrifice of animals, the use of alcoholic beverages and important aspects of agricultural rituals. Those aspects that do not pose any problem to the evangelical doctrines or morality are accepted, such as the use of native languages, traditional dress and medicinal herbs. Finally, some aspects of indigenous cultures are replaced by similar elements of official evangelical discourse. Referring to these aspects Samandú gives the examples of the substitution of bad spirits by demons, prayer healing taking the place of traditional healing methods and the importance of revelation in both indigenous and evangelical discourse.[33]

Indeed, there is an important level of continuity between traditional healing methods practised by an indigenous healer who contacts the world of gods and spirits in order to cure a patient, and prayer healing practices which address the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal churches. One of the evangelical respondents in Chaabilchoch told me:

> 'When a child becomes ill all of a sudden, some people say that the child is seen by the mountain [rilomil tzuul - hs], they burn copal pom and do all sorts of things. But we do not believe this. It may be a sin or one of the parents may have done something wrong. It can be cured only by praying to God for the health of the patient.'

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[31]. Garrard 1986: 202-204; Samandú 1990: 94-101.
[32]. Samandú uses the term *transacción* here.
[33]. Samandú 1990: 94-105; Samandú 1989: 38-44.

In his words, the classification of the illness in terms of rilomil tzuul and the practices designed to cure it are rejected. They are substituted by interpreting the illness as a moral problem which has to be dealt with by praying to God. In any case, disturbed relations with a central "person" in the universe, in this case God substituting for the Tzuultaq'a, remain at the heart of the problem and contacting the world of gods and spirits constitutes the central act of curing the disease.

In his discussion of the strategies of evangelical churches Samandú tries to qualify the frequently heard view that evangelical churches are launching a frontal attack on indigenous cultures. However the aspects of indigenous cultures which he includes in the various categories continue to indicate a rupture with indigenous cultures. Samandú includes important aspects of agricultural rituals and related meanings and everything having to do with saints in the category of eradication, while it has been shown above that these aspects touch the heart of the customary principle.

I would like to go a step further. My analysis of the evangelicals in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec points to much greater continuity. Indeed, the saints are a delicate matter and evangelicals take the Catholics to task for believing in saints, but they themselves often talk about the saints in personal terms as well. In Rubelpec an interesting dispute is going on between Catholics and evangelicals about the role of the saints. One Catholic told me:

> 'The saints are not alive. The evangelicals criticise us for our bad maize harvests because we do other things [paying ritual attention to the saints - hs]. But one villager who came back to our church now has better harvests than before.'

Similar statements from evangelicals reveal that the question is not so much whether the saints have any influence at all on the harvests, but rather whether this influence is positive or negative. In both cases the customary idea that the harvests depend on their contact with some "persons" in the universe comes out clearly.

In addition, everything that is related to agricultural rituals is not simply rejected by the evangelicals in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec. The phenomenon of substitution practices is applied by almost all the evangelicals on these occasions. Substitution practices can be defined in the following way: they pay ritual attention to the same occasions as those recognized by customary rituals and ask for the same essential things needed for daily life and survival on these occasions. They substitute official church-promoted practices for customary rituals and modify the "persons" who are addressed at these occasions in a Bible-oriented direction.

The section of this chapter which deals with customary practices has made clear that the evangelicals frequently perform substitution practices instead of customary rituals. For example at the maize planting, the

members of the Asamblea de Dios in Rubelpec do not have a meeting in the house in order to keep vigil over the seed of maize, put turkey blood and cocoa on the seed and burn copal pom and candles. Instead, they have a service in their church the night before the planting. The evangelicals have a service instead of customary practices when they inaugurate a new house. On both occasions most of the evangelicals stress that they pray to God instead of the Tzuultaq'a or the spirit of the house, but they ask God the same things which others would ask from the Tzuultaq'a and the spirit of the house.

It has been shown that there are many similar cases of substitution practices which suggest that there is not only discontinuity concerning customary practices but an important degree of continuity as well. The things which the evangelicals reject most explicitly and which they associate with customary religion, *i.e.* drinking, dancing, music and quarrelling, make sense from their perspective of making a rupture with the past and putting their life in order, but they do not touch the heart of customary religion. It has already been shown that specific doctrinal and discursive aspects play only a rather subordinate role in the motivation of Q'eqchi'es when they convert to an evangelical church.

In short, my findings indicate much more continuity than Samandú suggests. This difference may be related to the fact that he writes mainly about the strategies of the churches, probably referring primarily to evangelical leaders while my findings focus on what "ordinary" evangelical church members do and think. A considerable difference between evangelical church leaders and "ordinary" evangelicals may of course be expected in this respect.

Substitution practices constitute no evangelical monopoly. The substitution of the 'change of flowers' meeting on Sundays by the celebration of the Word is a similar phenomenon. Another example is presented by the gift of products and crops to the convent of the religious women in Tzunutz or the central parish church in Carchá by the Catholics of Rubelpec as a sacrifice to God who is presented as the source of their crops. It is not a coincidence that these Catholics call this practice 'mayejak'. Substitution practices are a clear expression of the continuity and modification of customary religion within the context of a dominant Bible-oriented principle.

God, the Tzuultaq'a and other "persons"

The dominance of the Bible-oriented principle in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec is expressed by the fact that God plays the central role in the religious discourse of the villagers. When talking with them about their religion, they mainly refer to God and, only reluctantly if at all, to the Tzuultaq'a.

It is not only the Bible-oriented meanings of their relations with God - rather abstract, individualistic, moral and not strictly reciprocal - that are

expressed by the villagers. In addition, God is the main "person" they address during customary or substitution practices and they ask Him the things they need to live. In this sense God has taken over specific characteristics that are attributed to the Tzuultaq'a in Samox and Xalihá. For example according to several villagers, God is the source of their maize harvest. Almost all of those who said that the house has a spirit continued to say that this spirit stems from the trees and the bushes they use to build their houses, and that God is the origin of the life of these plants. God replaces the Tzuultaq'a as the source of the spirit of the house. Moreover almost all the villagers said that they believed in spirits that can cause them harm, but they turn to God to protect themselves against them.

In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec the Tzuultaq'a is subordinated to God. The Tzuultaq'a is mentioned only during customary rituals and some villagers do not even address him or her on these occasions. On the question of whether the villagers believe the Tzuultaq'a is alive, there is considerable difference of opinion. Most Catholics think he or she is while a majority of evangelicals hold the mountains to be just "things". However one evangelical in Chaabilchoch confirmed the customary view that the mountain is sacred because he is the origin of their food and is created by God, but he locates the mountain more closely to man than to God. He makes an interesting reorganization of existing customary symbols such as the Tzuultaq'a, the wind and the rain, saying that 'the mountain is alive because he has clouds around and above him. With these clouds he worships God just like a bird who sings in praise of God. Man should do the same.' So man, the birds and the mountain are put on a par: they are alive and have the same obligation to pray to God. Another respondent told me: 'God has created everything equal, the people and the mountains'.

In short, in Samox and Xalihá the most important religious relation is between the community and the Tzuultaq'a seen as an intermediary between the community and God. In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec, the importance of the Tzuultaq'a - if he or she has any - consists of his or her role in worshipping God, next to man. Here the most important religious relation is between man and God.

The relations between the villagers of Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec and the Tzuultaq'a have an individual character, but all the other traits of these relations are customary: they are practical, tangible and strict reciprocal. In the words of one of the villagers of Rubelpec: 'The mountain is good to you when you are good, the mountain is bad when you are bad'.

The villagers do differentiate among the mountains. The central mountains are more important to them than the nearby mountains. In Chaabilchoch almost everyone knows some of these thirteen and talks about them with respect. They call these mountains the 'old mountains' because they know their names. The nearby mountains are unknown to most of the villagers because they are 'recent'. Apparently, they have not developed a relationship with the nearby mountains in the two decades since the

community has existed which suggests that in Chaabilchoch the capacity of customary religion in Chaabilchoch to adapt itself to new circumstances is limited. They took the relationship with some of the thirteen with them from their places of origin when they settled in Chaabilchoch.

The same phenomenon can be observed in Rubelpec but the community was probably founded centuries ago. Here the relative importance of the thirteen and the neglect of nearby ones can be explained by the fact that they live quite close to some of the thirteen, such as the Calvary in Cobán and the mountain Kojaj, so the distinction between the thirteen and the local Tzuultaq'as becomes blurred. Moreover many villagers work outside the village at least part of the year so their relations with the central Tzuultaq'as, who represent the landscape in all the places they go to within the Q'eqchi' region, is much more relevant.

In short, God is the principal "person" with whom the villagers of Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec relate. In their eyes He has adopted customary meanings, but the Bible-oriented meanings they attribute to Him are much more important to them. The Tzuultaq'a - if playing a role at all - is subordinated to God, represents customary meanings and supports prayers directed to God. Bible-oriented meanings dominate the universe in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec.

Customs losing ground?

It is difficult to say where customary religion in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec is heading. Almost all the respondents told me that there is a loss of customs, but most of them refer to negative things such as getting drunk or quarrelling. In any case, the community mayejak as well as most of the communitarian character of the patron saint's feasts have been lost. However it has been shown here that there is a considerable degree of continuity of customary meanings in both villages, especially at the private or household level.

CHAPTER FIVE

Q'EQCHI' RELIGION AND MODERNIZATION

5.1 Introduction

The practices and meanings promoted by the religious specialists among the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es and the main characteristics and variations of the latter's religion were discussed in Chapters Three and Four. In this chapter the question of classifying the ways in which "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es deal with religious representations and practices - whether they can be classified as pre-modern, early modern or contemporary modern - will be tackled first. These "dealings" are circumscribed by the room for manoeuvre which the Q'eqchi'es have to define which religious practices they must perform and which religious meanings they believe in. The influence of religious specialists on these meanings and practices set the limits of this room. Consequently, in the next section, the character and power of the specialists will be evaluated on the basis of the material presented in Chapter Three. The present chapter will conclude with some final considerations on Q'eqchi' religion.

5.2 Q'eqchi' religious meanings and practices: pre-modern, originally modern or contemporary modern?

The important religious meanings and practices that belong to the customary principle show clear pre-modern characteristics (see Chapter One). The customary principle views nature in a personalized way; it emphasizes the dependence of the Q'eqchi'es on this enchanted nature, and is oriented towards the manipulation of natural powers. In doing so the Q'eqchi'es transform these powers into predictable and trustworthy "persons" and in their relations with these powers they assume an active role. Thus natural powers become reactive rather than arbitrary, and relations with them are practical and tangible.

Customary religion underscores the symbolic importance of subsistence agriculture and activities; and elements within this economic sphere are also viewed in a religious, personalized way. This holds true for the image of land as the skin of the Tzuultaq'a, for labour when the community presents itself in a group-wise or collective way to the Tzuultaq'a and for products such as maize and houses which are imbued

with a spirit stemming from the Tzuultaq'a. Religious rituals are indispensable to ensure a good harvest and other things crucial for survival.

Moreover, customary religion portrays the Q'eqchi'es themselves and marks the ways they map their life-worlds in religious terms. It provides ritual and symbolic substance for the Q'eqchi'es' primary identification with their household and local community. Customary religion emphasizes two vital units. The first consists of the household, the house, the land that this household cultivates, the plants, crops and animals on this land and the specific saint and ancestors related to the household. A second unit includes the community, the mountain, the valley, the land the community cultivates, the animals they own, the plants that grow, the sun, the rain, the wind, the moon and the saints among others. Life is the central "substance" within these units and is inherent in all these elements unlike things that have an external origin.

In relating these units to one another customary religion emphasizes the importance of the community as a whole. This importance is reflected in the patron saint's feast for example, in the community mayejak, in the man of the household representing the community at planting rituals and in the communal meal as a standard ingredient of almost all customary rituals. Giving food appears to be a way of reaffirming good relations with other members of the community as well as with other "persons" in the universe such as the Tzuultaq'a (mayejak), the house (wa'tesink re li kab'l) and the spirit of maize (putting food on the seed the night before planting maize).

Customary religion also provides important ritual and symbolic contents for one of the secondary levels of identification: the Q'eqchi'es as a social and geographic category. The thirteen mountains represent the general Tzuultaq'a which encompasses the whole Q'eqchi' region. The mayejak which Q'eqchi'es from different communities perform at these thirteen mountains expresses cultural aspects which Q'eqchi'es as a group have in common.

In short, the personalization of nature; the importance of religion in the Q'eqchi'es construction of identity and in their ways of conceiving of social relations; the emphasis on subsistence agriculture and on rural life; the personalization of important aspects within this subsistence agriculture, and its practical, immediate and tangible character clearly give customary religion a pre-modern character. Only the trustworthy and predictable as opposed to the arbitrary character of personified nature contrasts with the pre-modern traits of religion as outlined in Chapter One.

By contrast, the Bible-oriented principle displays modern traits. It portrays nature as a creation of God, a creation which in itself has no religious relevance or personal character. Nature is disenchanted and can be used in an instrumental way. Bible-oriented religion is not related to any specific economic activity, but it encourages the Q'eqchi'es to maximize their economic performance and it has no objection at all to them doing so by means of market integration.

Bible-oriented religion does not conceive of social reality in such direct religious terms as customary religion. Nevertheless, it has important consequences for social relations and constructions of identity. In Bible-oriented religion moral standards of behaviour occupy a central place and social relations are understood in moral terms which are linked to God's will. As conversions to an evangelical church or the motives for becoming a catechist make clear, Bible-oriented religion may help the Q'eqchi'es to make a break with practices which are considered to be vices and to embark on an ordered life. These requirements of modern functionality are especially relevant to those who are involved in modern economic activities such as trade and wage labour.

In addition, the Word of God emphasizes the equality between Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii. In Chapter Two it was shown that this emphasis has played an important role in improving the self-esteem and self-confidence of the Q'eqchi'es. Moreover, Bible-oriented religion emphasizes the church community rather than the local community and underscores identification with the former. In Chapter Two it was made clear that this identification constitutes the Q'eqchi'es' other secondary unit of identification.

The emphasis on the church community and the possibilities of socialization it offers do not exclude the fact that Bible-oriented religion focuses mainly on the individual and on his or her relations with God and moral responsibilities. These relations are not clearly reciprocal and God has a rather abstract character. In Bible-oriented religion the concept of sin and the need to fear God come to the fore. God is neither clearly righteous nor trustworthy, as modern religion would have it.

In short, the profane ways in which nature and social reality are portrayed, linked to the encouragement of economic improvement and Selbstzwang, the moralization of social relations as well as the principle of equality of all human beings and the importance of the church community are all modern characteristics of Bible-oriented religion. The same holds true for its emphasis on the individual's relations with God and the importance of a written text as the ultimate religious authority. Only the image of a fearful and not very trustworthy God contrast with the characteristics of modern religion as outlined in the first chapter.

Religious creolization

There is more to Q'eqchi' religion than the predominantly pre-modern character of its customary elements and the primarily modern features of its Bible-oriented aspects. The ways the Q'eqchi'es deal with meanings taken from both principles clearly have a creolizing, hybrid and associative character. The Q'eqchi'es articulate modern and pre-modern meanings and practices in a creolizing way. To begin with, the very fact that the Q'eqchi'es use both principles in their religious meaning-making and that they perform

practices that express meanings belonging to both principles underlines the articulated character of their ways of dealing with religion. Almost all my respondents perform both Bible-oriented and customary or substitution practices.

Next, the fact that the Q'eqchi'es are generally not bothered very much about whether particular meanings from both principles might be inconsistent points to a primarily associative rather than rational method of constructing religious meanings. They associate specific occasions with specific practices and specific practices with specific meanings without being greatly concerned about whether or not all these meanings can be interrelated rationally. To be sure, there is clearly a degree of synchrony and convergence between customary and Bible-oriented religion, such as the parallels between customary healing practices and prayer healing. The importance of dream appearances in both customary religion and evangelical discourse, and the coincidence of the customary obligation of the whole community to maintain unity in its presentation towards the Tzuultaq'a and the moral requirements of Bible-oriented religion are further examples of such synchrony. However, where there is difference or inconsistency of meanings the Q'eqchi'es usually evade questions pointing to such inconsistency.

Nevertheless, the basic associative character of their religious creolization does not exclude the fact that they do try to secure some level of continuity and synchrony in cases of difference. Difference is articulated with at least a minimum degree of convergence and continuity. The practical use the villagers of Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch make of the distinction between the private or household level and the public level allows them to publicly adhere to the dominant Bible-oriented principle while maintaining a considerable level of customary meanings and practices on the private level. Another way of articulating difference with continuity is by adapting the meanings and practices of the subordinate principle to the meanings and practices of the dominant one. We have seen that this adaptation leads to varying relations between various "persons" in the universe, notably between God and Tzuultaq'a, and to varying articulations of customary and Bible-oriented practices in Samox and Xalihá on the one hand and Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec on the other.

The phenomenon of substitution practices perhaps presents the best example of the articulation of difference with continuity. Other examples of articulation are presented by such central elements of both principles as the cross and the mountains. The cross refers not only to the death and resurrection of Christ, but also to the customary universe and the spirit of maize. Most Tzuultaq'as have both a Spanish and a Q'eqchi' name as the example of San Pablo Xucaneb' makes clear.

In the process of adopting both customary and church-promoted practices the Q'eqchi'es adapt the meanings attached to these practices to respond to their practical and symbolic needs. They adopt and adapt

practices and meanings from both customary and Bible-oriented religion and out of these "inputs" construct their own religious blend. An example of this adaptation is presented by the villagers of Samox who, confronted with diseases and natural damage to their cash crops, made the Tzuultaq'a relevant to the cultivation of their coffee and cardamom. This opened up the possibility of making use of one of the strong assets of customary religion: its capacity to symbolically "solve" problems in relation to nature.

Both principles have specific abilities to respond to particular needs. The fact that these principles are expressed in a large number of practices and articulated in very creative ways even in villages that have been founded only recently - such as Xalihá, Chaabilchoch and Samox - points to the alive and dynamic character of Q'eqchi' religion, both customary and Bible-oriented. In terms of customary religion, migration may create problems because the link with the sacred landscape of the places the migrants left becomes disrupted. An identification with local Tzuultaq'as in the new places of settlement is difficult in the beginning because 'we do not know their names' or 'because these mountains are new' as some villagers of Chaabilchoch and other communities told me. This fact underscores the relative importance of pilgrimages to some of the central thirteen Tzuultaq'as in the settlement areas. However after some years identification with the local landscape may come about.

The Q'eqchi'es creolizing way of dealing with pre-modern and modern aspects of their religion is not just a contemporary modern response to relativization (see Chapter One). Its associative and hybrid features can be traced back to originally modern popular or lay religion and even pre-modern religion. These features of creolization are present at all times. Hence a further classification of Q'eqchi' religion into pre-modern, and originally or contemporary modern terms has to take other elements into account. Four elements of Q'eqchi' religion are relevant in this respect: its reflexive or non-reflexive nature, the level of privatization of religious decision-making, the level of fragmentation or its shattered character and finally the level of influence of religious specialists or the field character of institutionalized religion.

The Q'eqchi'es creative articulation point to the fact that there is no real difference between customary and Bible-oriented religion in terms of implicit or explicit elements. Customary rituals are not just practised out of habit or because the elderly men and women tell their fellow community members to perform them while meanings remain implicit. Nor are the practices offered by the churches adopted "consciously" by the Q'eqchi'es who are completely aware of all the explicit meanings attached to them. To some degree customary practices are objects of discussion and active meaning making among the Q'eqchi'es whereas to some extent churches are able to use their authority to make the Q'eqchi'es perform the practices they want them to perform. Both customary practices and Bible-oriented practices have implicit and explicit aspects or dimensions. However, the fact that only

very few respondents were unable to attribute meaning to the practices they perform indicates at least a basic level of explicity of meanings. Very few referred just to customs or the authority of local leaders or the clergy.

Religious meaning-making takes place in the context of a variety of sources of practices and meanings and this encourages some level of privatization of religious decision-making. It encourages some people to emphasize customary meanings while others stress Bible-oriented representations. This level of privatization of religious decision-making is reflected in the varieties of religious practices and the meanings attached to them within the community and in the number of households that can be regarded as mixed in ecclesiastical terms. The level of privatization is not the same in all the villages. In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec variation of religious practices and meanings is relatively large and in Rubelpec a minority of households even have members belonging to different churches. However, in every community the household remains the dominant unit in deciding on church membership and almost all my respondents adhered to the central meanings of both religious principles. In Xalihá and Samox religious variation hardly exists at all.

Not only is the degree of privatization of religious decision-making limited, the same holds true as regards fragmentation or the shattered character of religion. Of course, the Q'eqchi'es show relatively little interest in resolving inconsistencies and there are considerable contradictions between meanings from both principles. However these considerations are insufficient to characterize Q'eqchi' religion as a mismatched conglomerate of indeterminate beliefs of contemporary modern religion (see the first chapter). As was outlined above, the Q'eqchi'es have very specific ways of ordering their religious representations and practices.

In returning to the question of whether the institutional aspects of Q'eqchi' religion can be classified in terms of a religious field, several considerations have to be taken into account, such as the level of separation between economics and religion. In Chapter Seven the relations between Q'eqchi' economy and religion will be discussed and the conclusion reached that there is a limited but real level of relative autonomy between these aspects of Q'eqchi' reality. In addition, there are specific categories of religious specialists who try to influence the religious practices and meanings of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es.

In short, the criteria which would enable us to speak about a religious field have largely been met. The low level of privatization and individualization of religious decision-making, the low level of fragmentation of religious discourse, the fact that there is at least a minimum level of religious reflexivity and the fact that the concept of religious field can be fruitfully applied; all these arguments allow me to conclude that Q'eqchi' religious creolization is inscribed in an originally

modern context of popular or lay religion in relation to official religion propagated by religious specialists.[1]

5.3 The influence of religious specialists

As Chapter Three has made clear, "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es do not perform their religious practices or construct their religious meanings in isolation. Their room for manoeuvre is circumscribed by the influence of intervening churches and local specialists. In this section the influence of religious specialists will first be classified in terms of modernization. Secondly, the power to influence the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es will be assessed.

5.3.1 *Pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern?*

This section advances three central arguments which would lead us to classify the influence of Catholic pastoral agents and ministers as modern. First, their presence itself, their claim to authority on religious matters and their attempt to influence the religious practices and meanings of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi' believers all point to this conclusion. Bishops, priests, religious women, friars, and ministers conceive of themselves as having the task of influencing the religion of the Q'eqchi'es. This early modern characteristic holds true in the case of all these religious specialists.

However, there are considerable differences among them as regards the claim to authority. Sacramentalist priests make the strongest claim. They consider themselves as having exclusive access to pure doctrine and the exclusive right to decide on which religious practices and representations are legitimate and valid. Competing specialists are either incorporated or marginalized. The authority claims of pastoral agents applying the concept of liberating pastoral work is not exclusive. They seek cooperation with customary leaders and legitimize the latter's practices and meanings. They emphasize the need for reflection by both clergy and laity to discover the legitimate representations and practices stemming from both official texts such as the Bible and existing religious practices and representations. Nevertheless, pastoral agents from both tendencies reserve for themselves the right to perform standard Catholic practices and to decide on the meanings of these practices. Examples of this are the administration of the sacraments and the requirements believers are expected to fulfil before receiving these sacraments.

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[1]. It is certainly permissable to inscribe these conclusions in a Giddensian vein. He would classify the articulation of pre-modern (customary) and modern (Bible-oriented) elements as typical of a rather early phase of modernity, not of a more contemporary or radicalized form of modernity. See Giddens 1990: 48-51.

The exclusive right to administer the sacraments and emphasis on the role of the priest in mediating between believers and the sacred world is absent in the case of evangelical churches. Believers have direct access to the works of the Holy Spirit and their own religious responsibilities are emphasized. Nevertheless, even among evangelical churches claims to authority vary. In "historical" churches and in the Nazarene's church the authority of the minister is based partly on his theological training; in Pentecostal churches this training is much more limited. In the latter, the minister does not have a monopoly over interpretation of Bible texts. Direct sacred experiences of the believers are emphasized and the minister has to establish his authority through his personal relations with the believers.

A second argument to characterize the influence of intervening churches as modern is provided by the fact that the religious contents which these religious specialists promote have a clearly modern character as well. They all preach a rational, systematic and moralizing religious discourse which claims an eternal and universal validity. They all portray God in a rather abstract way, emphasize the Bible and focus on the individual's moral responsibility.

However, the discourse they proclaim is in no way static or constant. Some elements may constitute an important part of religious discourse and policy at one time to be abandoned and criticised at another. An example of this change is the importance given to the cofradías in colonial times, whereas contemporary sacramentalist priests reject them. Another example is the prominent role of apostolic movements such as the *cursillos de cristiandad* and the *legión de María* in Catholic pastoral policy until recently, and the present neglect of these movements in liberating pastoral work.

Moreover, the religious discourse proclaimed by the churches is not systematic and directive enough to prevent differences of opinion arising not only on pastoral policy but also on central discursive and theological issues. In the practice of pastoral work such differences may be as important as aspects of the discourse which they share. Pastoral agents working along the lines of liberating pastoral work complement these early modern aspects with elements that in the given context are difficult to classify as modern. These elements include their emphasis on the existing local community, rather than the local church community, their anti-capitalist stance, and their distrust of market integration.

The growing importance of these elements is reflected in the change of emphasis in liberating pastoral work from "consciousness raising" focusing on a "just" variant of economic, social and political modernization and increasing popular participation in the 1970s, to encouraging customary religion and Q'eqchi' identity today. The Q'eqchi'es are encouraged to perform customary practices and to reproduce customary meanings and these meanings and practices are incorporated into standard Catholic practices such as the Mass. On the other hand, the clergy following a

liberating policy today do not emphasize their anti-capitalism and distrust of market-integration very much any more.

Sacramentalist pastoral work tries to exercise a much more unambiguously modern influence. The priests' claim to exclusive authority means that they try to "dispossess" the Q'eqchi'es as regards religious meaning-making. The Salesians portray God as a "loving God" and the Provider of salvation who makes moral demands on the individual believer. Their religious discourse is universal and needs no "inculturation" into local cultures. In their eyes loyalty to the church has a higher priority than loyalty to the local community. They conceive of nature and social relations instrumentally, and in their social projects emphasize modern elements such as market integration and scientifically developed technology.

All these characteristics are clearly modern. The modernizing tendency of sacramentalist pastoral work was clearly expressed in the words of one Salesian priest: 'We promote a rational interpretation of the world'. Another one told me: 'God wants man to dominate nature and not the other way around as in the case of those bad customs which make them fatalistic'. However, the modernizing variant promoted by the Salesians has a paternalistic character both in religious and social matters, and does not encourage the Q'eqchi'es to take their own initiatives. In this way a more participatory or democratic variant of modernization is hampered.

Most evangelical churches share almost all the modern characteristics of the Salesians except for the exclusive claim to religious authority and the social projects. Moreover, their emphasis on direct religious experiences stresses the individualistic character of their religious discourse. However, there are important differences among evangelical churches. The rational and systematic character of religious discourse is much more pronounced in the case of the "historical" churches than in the Pentecostal churches, with the Nazarene's church in between.

All of these church leaders - Catholics and evangelicals - claim religious authority and promote a rational, moralizing religious discourse. The differences among these modern religious leaders can be understood in terms of creolization and fundamentalism. Liberating pastoral work promotes a hybrid or creolizing religious discourse starting from a standardized and universal foundation and incorporating customary practices and meanings and legitimizing customary leaders. Where creolizing or relativizing efforts are rejected and a claim to absolute and exclusive authority is made by the priests who apply a sacramentalist pastoral policy we are in the presence of a fundamentalist[2] position.

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[2]. I am not suggesting that sacramentalist pastoral work would show all the various meanings that can possibly be attributed to the term "fundamentalist". I only refer to the way fundamentalism was conceptualized in the first chapter as a specific reaction to relativization and globalization.

In Pentecostal churches coherent theology and doctrine have to give way to individual religious experiences. The importance of the latter opens up the possibility of a more fragmented religion which emphasizes private religious decisions. The continuous process of splitting up of churches with groups of individual believers starting their own church, may be an indicator of a more contemporary modern form of religion. Moreover, the tensions that have come to the fore in recent decades, first between priests and catechists on the one hand and customary leaders on the other and later between Catholic and evangelical leaders, point to the fact that it has not been easy for religious specialists to deal with increasing, contemporary modern relativization.

A third argument which would lead us to classify the influence of churches as modern is provided by their attempts to intervene in social matters. Both sacramentalist and liberating pastoral work are strongly committed to dealing with problems that are created in fields other than the religious one. Catholic pastoral agents consider poverty, insufficient access to education and health care - and in the case of liberating pastoral work the violation of Human Rights and of Guatemalan law - to be incompatible with God's will; and this obliges them to set up an impressive number of projects and activities. There is a much more limited scale of social commitment in some evangelical churches. In addition, both pastoral agents who apply a sacramentalist pastoral policy and evangelical leaders promote religiously based morals which encourage the individual believer to improve his or her economic performance: God wants man to work hard and improve his or her economic situation.

Next, church leaders try to influence the Q'eqchi'es' constructions of identity. Liberating pastoral work encourages the Q'eqchi'es to continue to identify with their local community and tries to reinforce their identification with the Q'eqchi'es as a supra-local social category. The policies of both sacramentalist pastoral work and most of the evangelical churches, on the other hand, encourage the Q'eqchi'es to be proud of themselves but delegitimize specific cultural and religious contents which may give a symbolic substance to Q'eqchi' identity. They promote identification as "believers in God"; this has to be seen as the cultural contribution of Salesians and evangelicals to a wider Guatemalan national identity.

Finally, especially during the period of massive violence, every group of religious specialists exercised its ideological influence: liberating pastoral work questioned power relations both at the local and national levels, while sacramentalist pastoral work and most of the evangelical churches tried to keep "their" believers from engaging in political activity. In the first chapter all these types of social intervention were classified as modern.

In short, the influence of intervening churches can generally be classified as modern. In the first chapter the point was made that the very existence of religious specialists and the rational character of their discourses are themselves expressions of an originally modern condition.

In addition, there are local religious leaders who are typical "brokers": most of them play an intermediary role between a church and their local community and at the same time symbolize the possibility and legitimacy of creolizing customary and Bible-oriented meanings and practices. In the case of catechists and evangelical lay leaders Catholic pastoral agents and ministers teach them to promote Bible-oriented meanings and practices as their primary task. However, these lay leaders belong to the local community and the relative autonomy of this community can be used to modify external practices and meanings and to incorporate them selectively. Either in private (in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec) or also in public (in Xalihá and Samox), most of the catechists and local evangelical leaders perform customary or substitution practices and adhere to crucial customary meanings as well. The fact that they do so makes it legitimate for other community members to articulate modern Bible-oriented meanings and practices with pre-modern customary representations and rituals.

It was pointed out that until a few decades ago customary leaders such as chinames and pasawink played an important role in publicly promoting both customary meanings and rituals and representations and activities related to the church. Nowadays, they are unable to do so in the evangelical churches and in Salesian-run churches they are either marginalized or incorporated into church activities with the proviso that they abstain from promoting customary practices in public. However, as was shown, even in the latter case the chinames and pasawink continue to practise customary rituals and express customary meanings in private. In churches run by priests who work along the lines of liberating pastoral work chinames and pasawink retain their capacity to articulate the promotion of customary rituals and representations, even in public, with encouraging to take Bible-oriented practices and meanings seriously.[3]

In short, only pasawink who have been marginalized from both the evangelical and the Salesian-run Catholic church are not in a position to promote the articulation of customary with Bible-oriented religion. Except for these particular pasawink all local religious leaders have a primary responsibility to promote either customary or Bible-oriented religion, but in their daily lives they exemplify the possibility and legitimacy of articulating pre-modern and modern religious meanings and practices. In this way they meet both the requirements of their task or relations with churches and the

[3]. The examples of Samox and Xalihá may have made clear that the pasawink and chinames have not just disappeared from community life, as Wilson (Wilson 1995: 247) holds. Respondents with a regional overview confirmed my position on this matter. Again, Wilson is generalizing too much on the basis of his specific experiences in war-torn communities.

main characteristics of the fundamental strategy of the Q'eqchi'es in general in dealing with their religion. Their "broker" character becomes apparent.[4]

5.3.2 *Religious power*

The predominantly originally modern influence of churches and the mixed pre-modern and originally modern impact of local leaders tells us something about the kinds of influence the specialists exercise. Their capacity to do so is another question.

There are a number of facts that indicate a considerable degree of power on the part of priests, religious women and ministers. A first indicator is the importance of the Bible-oriented principle in Q'eqchi' religion. The standard meanings and practices which the Catholic and evangelical churches promote largely coincide with the Bible-oriented principle within the religious discourse of "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es[5], while liberating pastoral work also stimulates the customary principle and the various ways the Q'eqchi'es articulate both principles.

Next, in all four local villages that have been presented here, the villagers perform almost all the practices that are promoted by the Catholic and evangelical churches. Exceptions are the minority of villagers in Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec who do not participate in any church, the minority of couples in Rubelpec and Samox who are not married and in Samox the priest is not (yet) able to persuade the villagers to contribute to the construction of centre buildings. In Xalihá the villagers do not pay much attention to Christmas or Holy Week.

In addition, priests of both pastoral tendencies are able *grosso modo* to achieve their objectives of either integrating catechists and customary leaders into the performance of both parish-promoted and customary practice, or incorporating the chinames into parish policy and marginalizing the pasawink who want to go on performing customary practices at the community level. The Salesian priests are even able to make the

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[4]. Wilson does acknowledge the mediating role of the catechists between external, institutionalized power and the community, but he still writes about a rapid switch in religious and moral frameworks, a radical new world view, and a sea change in identity as a result of the changes they have provoked in the local communities (Wilson 1995: 179, 192, 199, 296). To be sure, the original catechists programme in the 1970s and the continuing programme of the Salesians have introduced important changes into the religious life of the local communities, but because Wilson does not see the continuity of customary practices and meanings even among Salesian-trained catechists he overemphasizes discontinuity. His classification of Q'eqchi'es into "traditionalists", promoters of "orthodoxy" and those working in the "indigenist revitalization movement" misses the essential point that in practice all of them articulate religious meanings and practices from various sources.

[5]. The main difference is the fact that the Catholic church for example promotes the image of a loving God while in the Bible-oriented principle the fearful and unpredictable character of God comes much more to the fore.

performance of customary practices at the community level very difficult; the activities organized by cofradías in the town of Carchá being the main exceptions.

The dominance of the customary principle in Samox and Xalihá is at least partly related to the encouragement given by the priests in the revival of customary religion. The pasawink in both communities stressed the importance of the support they receive from the priests and the parish council of pasawink. The dominance of one principle over the other in the four villages coincides with the kind of pastoral policy that is followed by the churches. These are important indicators of the strong power position priests have as regards local leaders and communities.

Priests have several advantages in their relations with the local communities compared to their evangelical counterparts. They are the only ones who are able to prepare the Q'eqchi'es to receive the sacraments and to administer them. In this respect, the central meanings of the sacraments constitute a power resource on the part of Catholic specialists. Next, compared to Pentecostal churches in particular the Catholic leaders have much more pronounced authority as regards legitimate religious discourse, such as Bible interpretations. In addition, the Catholic church provides a considerable number of social projects while this capacity - and willingness - on the part of most evangelical churches is very limited. Finally, as was outlined above, the Nazarene's church has a rather democratic organization, limiting the power of ministers and other church leaders: they have to be elected by the local church community every two years.

Nevertheless, the power of Catholic pastoral agents and ministers is limited. First, although the Q'eqchi'es identify with their church, this identification is subordinated to their primary identification with the household and local community. As a result, each minister and Catholic pastoral agent has to gain the confidence of the community before being able to work with its members. This confidence cannot be taken for granted and is not unconditional. In addition, the appearance of evangelical churches and the restoration of the Catholic church have taken place only rather recently.

Secondly, there is considerable diversity and tension among these specialists which seriously hampers any effort to work out a common pastoral policy towards the Q'eqchi'es. This is certainly true of the Catholic church with its diverse clergy, religious orders, bishoprics, diocese-like institutions and, last but not least, diverging pastoral policies. The increasing fragmentation of evangelical churches points in the same direction.

Thirdly, either because of their limited numbers or out of conviction Catholic pastoral agents and ministers work through structures of lay leaders which in practice constitute the backbone of their church. The catechists are certainly very sincere in transmitting to their communities what these pastoral agents tell them; especially in Salesian-run parishes these agents' control over the catechists is considerable. Nevertheless, the

fact that even in these parishes the catechists continue their strategy of articulating practices and meanings from both principles provides an example to the other members of their communities. The broker character of these leaders ensures that they are not mere executors of what they have been told by the Catholic clergy or ministers.

The same pattern applies in the case of evangelical church leaders: the importance of Bible-oriented practices and meanings is an indicator of their influence, but at the private level many evangelicals perform practices that demonstrate an important level of continuity with customary religion. In both the preceding chapter and in the present one several quotations were presented from evangelicals who suggest that the power of their leaders is limited and that it is the Q'eqchi'es themselves who decide mainly about what they believe and what they do. The members of these churches hold meetings and it does not matter very much whether a minister is present or not. They emphasize individual religious responsibility. Evangelical leaders were certainly unable to convince my respondents of the discursive and doctrinal differences between their churches and the Catholic one. The power of local evangelical leaders and ministers should not be exaggerated.

Referring to the power of the catechists several considerations should be taken into account. The authority they derive from their contacts with priests and religious women is an important power resource vis-à-vis other community members. In addition, their "office" has a permanent character, their role in the community has a the strong discursive element (Bible explanation, sacrament preparation), and they have access to the Bible and other external meanings through courses and training sessions. Catechists benefit from intensive religious training and from skills acquired for example in literacy groups. Next, the importance of the Bible-oriented principle and parish-promoted practices is not only indicative of the power of Catholic pastoral agents, but also of the catechists in their communities. They play a prominent role in the Catholic part of the public level in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec. In the latter community being a Catholic is even associated with being a collaborator with the catechists. Nevertheless, the fact that they themselves apply an articulating strategy in their religious practices and meanings shows that they are more likely to be regarded as part of the community than as externally supported religious leaders dominating the local communities.

In most communities customary leaders such as chinames, cofradías, hermandades and pasawink do not have access to external power resources like those of the catechists and local evangelical leaders. Only in parishes where a policy of liberating pastoral work is followed are they legitimized and authorized to play an important role by the clergy. In most communities they rely solely on the authority of age and the willingness of the community to value customary religion. Moreover, the "office" of chinames and membership in cofradías and hermandades is temporary; their influence is mainly practical rather than discursive; and they need the confirmation of

their "office" by the local community. The power of the pasawink has a stronger basis because their "office" is permanent, their role is discursive (praying and leading customary rituals) and they have the power to expel someone from the local community. They did so in Xalihá only a few years ago.

Those pasawink who also work as aj ilonel may have specially important power resources to draw on. They offer a crucial service: cure for illness. They have specific knowledge about how everything and every "person" should be treated and this knowledge is partially secret. In addition, they are feared because they are suspected of having aj tuul qualities enabling them to inflict harm.

In any case, the roles customary leaders play in their communities vary and the importance of the customary principle itself is the best indicator of their influence in local communities. In Xalihá and Samox almost all the villagers perform customary rituals in a comprehensive way and the customary principle is dominant in organizing the religious discourse of the villagers. In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec they play hardly any role at the public level, but they clearly appreciate the fact that many villagers continue to practise customary rituals in private. They are often called in to lead customary practices at the household level.

In short, the power of religious specialists vis-à-vis the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es varies from one category of specialists to another; the influence of priests and catechists in particular is considerable. However, the relationship between specialists and "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es is not characterized by one of the parties unconditionally accepting and doing what the other party says. It is rather a matter of - often implicit - negotiation. Even the effects of conversion to an evangelical church should not be exaggerated. Such conversion has limited discursive consequences and the way converts deal with an evangelical church is not very different from the way they used to deal with the Catholic church.

The power of intervening churches is considerable; in some cases they are able to encourage "their" believers to make partial breaks with existing religious practices and meanings as the phenomena of substitution practices shows. However, these same substitution practices also indicate that a considerable level of continuity is maintained. In general, religious specialists are unable to significantly affect or alter the fundamental strategy of the Q'eqchi'es for dealing with their religion, *i.e.* the selective articulation of pre-modern and modern aspects adopted from indigenous and external sources which they adapt to their symbolic needs in an originally modern framework.

The analysis in this chapter points first of all to the fact that the concepts of pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern can be applied both to the religion of intervening churches and local religious leaders and to the religious practices and representations of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es. Secondly, there is no reason to assume that the Q'eqchi'es are

heading for clear-cut religious modernization. As long as they are able to continue their strategy of selective articulation of pre-modern and modern aspects their religion will have a hybrid character. There is no reason to suppose that the Q'eqchi'es are unavoidably heading for religious modernization.

Over the last few decades Bible-oriented religion has certainly been reinforced among the Q'eqchi'es because of increasing intervention both by the Catholic and evangelical churches, but this increase has probably not led to any great decline in customary religion. In Xalihá and Samox there are no indications of the latter; in Samox there has even been a revival of customary religion. In Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch the community mayejak and much of the communitarian character of the patron saint's feast have been lost, but the villagers have retained an important degree of continuity in customary practices and meanings. The differences between Samox and Xalihá on the one hand and Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch on the other are indicative of the fact that churches do play a role in the religious affairs of these communities, but their influence is not strong enough to significantly alter the relative autonomy of the local communities which enables them to continue their religious creolization.

An important effect of the power of these churches is the declining public role of women in the local community. In the Salesian-run parishes in particular the catechists tend to dominate not only religious life but all community affairs. The fact that the vast majority of them are men who have a negative attitude towards the "general assembly" has brought about a reduction in the public role of women. Customary leaders are always couples and both the man and the woman decide on their tasks; although the "general assembly" was and still is made up mainly of adult men, I have seen women participating on this level in various communities. In short, the increasing influence of catechists and evangelical leaders, who are almost always men, curtails the public role of women.

The religious women have been unable to neutralize this effect by organizing women's groups or female catechists. These groups are not expected to play a leading role in the community and even in those cases where there are female catechists they are supposed to work only with women's groups and not to play a leading or discursive role in the celebration of the Word. Women's groups focus on practical skills such as textile making and on religious instruction which emphasizes existing gender patterns.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ECONOMIC FIELD:

INTERVENING AGENCIES AND LOCAL LEADERS

6.1 Introduction

In the following chapters the focal point will shift from the world of gods and spirits to the material existence of the Q'eqchi'es, or more precisely, to the ways in which they try to reproduce and improve their material conditions. As in the case of Q'eqchi' religion, the field approach will be applied in studying the Q'eqchi' economy though without suggesting that religion is irrelevant to it. In the previous chapters we came across several examples of religious representations and practices that are interrelated with economic matters. In addition, the profane manner in which the Q'eqchi'es talk about their economic practices does not rule out the possibility that these practices may be guided by implicit religious assumptions. One of the objectives of this analysis of Q'eqchi' economy is to detect its interrelations with Q'eqchi' religion; however in order to do so, economy and religion must first be distinguished. In the next two chapters the issue of the interrelations between economy and religion and the relative autonomy of one vis-à-vis the other will be discussed.

The analysis of Q'eqchi' economy will start with an outline of the main actors and agencies that intervene in the life-world of the Q'eqchi'es and influence their economic strategies. Next, local Q'eqchi' leaders who play a prominent role in the economy of the communities will be presented. In Chapter Seven the principal economic practices, main traits and variations in Q'eqchi' economic strategies will be discussed. In Chapter Eight the economic strategies of the Q'eqchi'es, the influences of intervening actors and agencies and the role of local economic leaders will be classified to pre-modern, early or contemporary modern terms and the power resources to which these actors, agencies and leaders have access will be listed. The material context of these strategies has been outlined in Chapter Two.

6.2 Intervening actors and agencies

Churches have essentially an external character, but almost all the communities accept the fact that one or several churches play a role in local religious life. This external character - external to the social and geographical

units with which the Q'eqchi'es primarily identify - is even more pronounced in the case of actors and agencies that intervene in the economy of local Q'eqchi' communities and households. These actors and agencies consist almost exclusively of aj Kastii who have a difficult task trying to convince the Q'eqchi'es of their good intentions. The Q'eqchi'es have interests that clash with those of several of them such as the landlords and merchants, the first two categories of intervening actors and agencies to be discussed in this section. The other categories are state agencies, para-statal institutions and NGOs and churches.[1]

6.2.1 *Landlords*

The landlords who own large estates in the Q'eqchi' region show a wide variety of origins and nationalities.[2] For example there are descendants of Germans, army officers and other whites or aj Kastii who live in the capital, and Spaniards and North Americans living abroad. Among them, one looks in vain for Q'eqchi'es or members of other indigenous groups.

These landlords control approximately one third of the available arable land in the Q'eqchi' region. Their estates can be classified into *haciendas* or cattle ranches, and *fincas* which grow cash crops. In general an estate which has at least a few *caballerías*[3] is considered to be a finca or hacienda. The main coffee and cardamom growing fincas are to be found in the highlands of the Q'eqchi' heartland. In the last decades relatively little capital has been invested in these fincas. Just after the war the fincas in Verapaz boasted the highest levels of investment and productivity but by the end of the 1980s, they had dropped to the lowest in the country.[4] Even the railroads and steamships connecting the central highlands with the Caribbean seaports have fallen into disrepair. The exceptions are the fincas in the lowlands of the Polochic river valley which are modern farms growing rice and other grains. Some of these farms raise cattle as well though most cattle is raised in the settlement areas of Izabal, El Petén and the Franja. However, in most of these areas cattle raising turned out to be unprofitable and several landlords, including the Lucas García brothers in the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas area, are selling out.

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[1]. Only the most important intervening agencies and actors will be discussed: those that exercise a significant influence on the economy of the Q'eqchi'es. Consequently, agencies such as the oil company in Rubelsanto will not be dealt with.

[2]. Information on landlords and the ways they run their estates was collected by interviewing respondents who have knowledge of these issues in a specific area, such as catechists, priests, and employees of state agencies and NGOs. Moreover, I have visited several of these estates in the Cobán and Carchá areas.

[3]. One caballería equals 45.1 hectares.

[4]. Source: a team of the research institute AVANCSO which has compared the levels of investment on fincas in various parts of the country.

The cattle raising farms are very labour extensive so few Q'eqchi'es live or work on these haciendas. In contrast, the growing of coffee and cardamom does require much labour. The economic strategy of the finca owners is based on the brutal exploitation of the labour force which is organized along semi-feudal lines. The labour force on these fincas falls into two categories: the permanent workers (*mozos colonos*), and temporary labourers (*jornaleros*).

Almost all the mozos are Q'eqchi'es who have no access to land of their own and thus no alternative but to live and work on a finca. They work in the coffee or cardamom production a large part of the year. To compensate they are allowed to use a plot of land of a few manzanas[5] to grow some of their basic food crops. These plots are usually the less fertile ones high up the mountain slopes. In addition, they receive a wage of between three and seven quetzales[6] a day except during the coffee harvest period. Some fincas pay as little as one or two quetzales a day while the official minimum wage is 11.25 quetzales. The landlords feel the need to exercise strict control of every aspect of the social life of the mozos. On several of the fincas I visited, the landlords try to create economic differentiation among their mozos by coopting some of them and letting them have the usufruct of a larger plot of land in return. This is designed to disrupt the existing social structure of the mozos. The only kind of social organization allowed has a religious character and trade unions are forbidden.

The jornaleros are seasonal workers who work in the coffee harvest. In October, November and December thousands of families are brought in from outside the Q'eqchi' region, mainly from Baja Verapaz and El Quiché. Like the mozos in this period they are payed by the piece, which makes it possible for a family to earn up to ten or fifteen quetzales a day.

This large scale cash crop production has very severe consequences for the Q'eqchi'es. First, the occupation of a large proportion of the best arable land is one of the principal reasons for the serious land shortage in the Q'eqchi' region. In addition, much of the land controlled by large landowners is not used for productive purposes. For example the finca of Sasis situated west of Carchá, has a territory of 245 caballerías (11,049.5 hectares). Only nine of these caballerías are used to grow coffee while the 500 families of mozos colonos have some 15 caballerías at their disposal to grow their food crops. Thus in total 24 caballerías are used for agricultural purposes and 221 caballerías (9,967.1 hectares) lay fallow. Of course part of this fallow land is not suited for agriculture, but there is still an enormous potential of fertile land which is held back from the Q'eqchi'es in an area where land scarcity is most severe. In the Petén and Izabal areas, the aj

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[5]. A manzana equals 6987.2 square metres. 64.6 Manzanas make up one caballería and 16 cuerdas equal one manzana. A cuerda is 436.7 square metres.

[6]. At the time fieldwork was done the US dollar was worth more or less five quetzales.

Kastii land owners leave a large part of their land unused and deny Q'eqchi'es access to them.

Secondly, the pressure on land and the expansion of large landed estates result in countless land conflicts between landlords and Q'eqchi' communities. Those that took place in the settlement areas during the 1970s have already been discussed in Chapter Two, they continue to the present day. To give one of many examples, the community of Venecia had been cultivating a piece of land on the finca Panacté, municipality of Panzós, for more than a decade with the consent of the owner of the finca. Then, the finca was taken over by a new owner; at the same time rumours about the construction of a new bridge and road which would make the finca more accessible, incited the new finca owner to throw the community off his land. When they refused to leave the owner decided to send a band of gunmen to kill four members of the community on February 6, 1991. The community does not exist any more.[7] According to the office of legal assistance of the bishopric of Verapaz, land conflicts are the principal reasons for human rights violations in the region.

The export of coffee, cardamom and meat has a positive effect on the country's balance of payments but the Q'eqchi'es see very little of this money. Government investment in the region is very limited - official figures are not available - and in spite of their legal obligations landowners' willingness to invest in such things as health care or education facilities is negligible. For instance, in their efforts to organize primary schools several priests told me they have come up against serious opposition from finca owners. Not only do they refuse to contribute financially but many of them even resist efforts to set up externally financed education facilities.

The Q'eqchi'es react to this intervention by landlords in various ways. Communities involved in land conflicts may resort to the department of legal assistance of the bishopric of Verapaz - dozens of communities actually do - but there are also many who, after a while, see no alternative but to leave and look for a piece of land elsewhere. Mozos colonos sometimes leave the finca to look for a piece of land in the settlement areas. Chapter Two makes it clear that they constitute the main driving force behind the migration movements in the region. In recent years this movement has even been supported by the landlords because they want to stem population increase on their fincas and several of them are transforming their finca into haciendas which will need much less labour in the future. Younger men and women especially leave the fincas, but some mozos colonos do not dare take the risk of leaving. Several of them on various fincas told me: 'Although we are in a bad situation, we go on in this way'.

The general reaction of those who live outside a finca is to refuse to work for a landlord. They profoundly dislike fincas and landlords. Several

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[7]. Sources within the Catholic church.

respondents replied to my question on finca work by stressing: 'Never again!'. In Xalihá only a few younger men who are not yet married go to work on a finca once in a while; in Chaabilchoch only one respondent told me he sometimes works on a nearby hacienda and in Samox, no one works for a landlord. In Rubelpec where wage labour is by far the most important source of income, only five villagers work on nearby fincas despite the fact that the wages they can earn there during the coffee harvest period are higher than elsewhere. The villagers even prefer to go to distant places such as the Franja and El Petén to work for other Q'eqchi'es than to work on a nearby finca which pay a higher wage. As a result of the Q'eqchi'es refusal to work as jornalero, the administrators of the fincas have to bring in thousands of households from other parts of the country during the coffee harvest.[8]

6.2.2 *Merchants*

With respect to trade and commerce in the Q'eqchi' region, a distinction has to be made between cash crop trade on the one hand, and retail trade in consumer goods on the other hand.[9] The latter is open to Q'eqchi'es and members of other indigenous groups while the former is almost monopolized by aj Kastii merchants.

The power of the aj Kastii merchants who buy cash crops such as coffee, cardamom, and rice from Q'eqchi' villagers is considerable. They are the only ones able to take advantage of the poor infrastructure and the lack of a properly functioning market system. Most communities are not connected to any road at all and except for the three central towns of Cobán, Carchá and Chamelco there is no functioning local market where the Q'eqchi'es can sell their cash crops.

On the one hand the Q'eqchi'es have no alternative but to take their crops to the nearest road and wait for a merchant with a truck, a so-called *camionero*, to pass by. On the other hand the types of trucks able to negotiate these roads are expensive and only some of the aj Kastii in the central towns have access to enough capital or credit to buy one. In the Cobán and Lancetillo areas merchants even use small aircraft to transport the cardamom

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[8]. Wilson's statement that the majority of Q'eqchi' men are engaged in day wage labour on the fincas (Wilson 1995: 24, 47-48) is refuted both by my own findings in the villages I worked in and by the information provided by spokesmen who have a regional overview. Only in very extreme circumstances, such as in those villages in which the local economic structure has been destroyed by army violence, do villagers have no other choice but to go and work on fincas. Wilson has worked mainly in this kind of communities, which make up only a small minority of the total of local Q'eqchi' communities. About 100 of the total of 1600 local communities have suffered from massive army violence.

[9]. This part on merchants is based on information provided by spokesmen and spokeswomen with a regional overview and on interviews with the respondents in the local communities I studied in detail.

harvest. Thus, after waiting for hours at the side of the road, the Q'eqchi'es are very dependent on a camionero who passes by. This dependence makes it possible for camioneros to make price agreements among each other. Of course, it is difficult to prove the existence of such agreements, but many Q'eqchi'es who deal with these camioneros complained to me about the fact that the camioneros impose a fixed price on them.

An indication that price fixing takes place is presented by what happened to the cardamom dryer in Samox. The villagers managed to get a loan of 15,000 quetzales from the state bank, *Banco Nacional de Desarrollo Agrícola* (BANDESA) to build a cardamom dryer hoping to get better prices for their cardamom in a processed form. When they first offered their processed cardamom for sale, they did not find any merchant willing to pay a higher price for their cardamom than for the non-processed variety. At present, the dryer is not used any more and the villagers still have to pay off a debt of thousands of quetzales.

In addition, especially in Xalihá and Samox, many respondents complained that they had recently been cheated by camioneros. In Samox five villagers delivered their coffee harvest to a merchant who, in the end, refused to pay at all. In Xalihá three villagers told me that they were cheated that year. One of them had been robbed of ten quintales of rice representing a value of 400 quetzales. According to the villagers the fact that they hardly speak Spanish seriously undermines their negotiating ability.[10]

The fact that these market conditions and the power position of the camioneros seriously restrict the opportunities of the Q'eqchi'es in integrating into the market economy, is underlined by the examples of El Petén and Rubelpec. In El Petén the low prices which the Q'eqchi'es receive for their products because of these constraints seriously discourage them to sell their products at all.[11] In contrast, the villagers of Rubelpec have direct access to the market in Carchá which significantly reduces the power position of individual merchants. In the next chapter I will show that the villagers of Rubelpec are very willing to develop many market-oriented activities.

The lack of access to capital is an important factor limiting the possibilities for the Q'eqchi'es to trade in cash crops. In the villages I studied in detail, I came across only four respondents who are engaged in coffee and cardamom trade. They buy these products from their fellow villagers but have to sell them to the same camioneros as the other villagers. As a result, their profits remain low.

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[10]. Wilson's claim that negotiations between merchants and Q'eqchi'es take place in the Q'eqchi' language (Wilson 1995: 24) is denied by all my respondents when asked explicit questions on this matter.

[11]. Information provided by the priests and religious women as well as by agricultural extension workers in the various areas of El Petén. Price differences of a quintal of maize between El Petén and Cobán can be as high as 15 to 20 quetzales.

When capital is available, the Q'eqchi'es are able to make important improvements. In recent years the programme of multiplicadores de pastoral social of the bishopric of Verapaz has encouraged the villagers of four communities in the areas of San Luís Petén and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, to reflect on their economic situation. As a result, they decided to buy a truck financed by a loan mediated by the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the bishopric in 1992. This truck has allowed them to take their rice to Zacapa in the eastern part of the country and sell it to the most important rice trader in Guatemala. In this way, the villagers leave out the intermediary merchants and sell their rice at a price of 55 quetzales a quintal. Middlemen offered them 25 quetzales in their own villages. Nevertheless, the example of these four villagers is an exception to the rule that lack of access to capital, poor infrastructure and the absence of a proper market system exclude the Q'eqchi'es from cash crop trade. The resulting dependence on aj Kastii camioneros seriously affects the profits derived from cash crops production.

Lack of capital does not prevent the Q'eqchi'es from going into the retail trade in consumer goods. For example, one third of the households in Rubelpec have one or several members who are engaged in this trade. They buy clothes, shoes, salt, soap, candles and the like in Carchá and Cobán and travel to isolated villages in the north and east to sell these items.

6.2.3 *State agencies*

Private actors are not the only ones to intervene in the economy of the Q'eqchi'es. There are several state agencies in the Q'eqchi' region that are supposed to work with the local communities.

INTA

We have already come across the *Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria* (INTA), the state agency in charge of the legalization of land rights in the settlement areas.[12] It is supposed to give out titles to land officially known as *baldío*: a piece of land that can be used for agricultural purposes but which has no private owner and consequently belongs to the state. In addition, INTA has given out *fincas nacionales* to cooperatives. These fincas were confiscated from their German owners during the Second World War and have not been returned to them. Moreover, INTA gives out small plots of land, lotes, to individual households to build their houses. In the cases of Xalihá and Chaabilchoch, it has already been shown in Chapter Two that the

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[12]. INTA has regional offices in Cobán, La Tinta, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, Modesto Mendez, Poptún, San Luís Petén and Sayaxché. Except for the office in Sayaxché I have interviewed senior officials in all these offices and collected the relevant INTA publications on their work.

lotes scheme is motivated by political reasons: to concentrate the villagers to back up the army's policy of controlling them. Finally, INTA has two training centres in Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and Modesto Mendez (Río Dulce area) to instruct community leaders, but in 1992 only the one in Modesto Mendez was operating.

In principle, INTA offers two kinds of land titles to peasants who claim baldío lands: the first is called *parcelamiento* and the other, *patrimonio agrario colectivo*. Several other names are used to refer to the latter but the type of title remains the same. In the case of a parcelamiento scheme, INTA gives out fixed plots of land to which no one yet has access. These titles are strictly individual, *i.e.* only an individual household may receive such a title. At first the household obtains a provisional title upon paying the first ten per cent of the price of the land; the balance has to be paid in yearly installments over the next ten or twenty year, without interest. In the end INTA is supposed to grant the permanent title. An owner is allowed to sell this permanent title, but those who do this are not allowed to buy any more land from the state.

The patrimonio agrario colectivo title has a mixed communitarian and individual character. The Local Development Committee (see below) of each community is the one which deals with INTA in order to become entitled to the total amount of land on behalf of the community. This committee allocates specific plots of land to each individual household. Both the committee and the individual households receive the titles and these indicate which part of the land belongs to whom. If the household wants to sell its plot, the committee has to approve of the new owner.

These kinds of titles are especially suited to communities that already have practical access to the land in question and want to legalize this access. First, there is the question of the legal status of the land whether it has an owner or is a baldío. In the latter case the land has to be surveyed; its quality, characteristics and price, as well as the households who are to benefit from it, have to be established. For all these services the community has to call in and pay an INTA engineer several times. Next, the community pays ten per cent of the price and receives provisional titles. Eventually, after ten or twenty years, when the villagers and individual peasants and farmers have paid the full price of the land without interest, INTA should concede the permanent titles.

Both schemes for legalizing land rights may sound reasonable, especially the patrimonio agrario colectivo scheme which responds to the mixed communitarian and individual household control preferred by the Q'eqchi'es themselves when administrating their own lands (see next chapter). In practice, however, these schemes turn out to be very problematic. The parcelamiento scheme has been applied on a small scale in various parts of the Q'eqchi' region, but the largest projects are the ones in the Polochic valley, along the main road in the Río Dulce area, in Raxruhá and in Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. In the Polochic valley, 92 caballerías of

fertile lands have been distributed among individual households in plots of five to seven manzanas each. The parcelas granted in the Río Dulce area are larger: between 14 manzanas and one caballería. The 700 families to benefit in the Raxruhá and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas areas have parcelas of between a few manzanas and one caballería. In the latter areas especially the majority of beneficiaries are aj Kastii from other parts of the country.

These beneficiaries have to face serious difficulties. The parcelamiento projects started several decades ago - as early as 1962 in the case of Raxruhá and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas - but even according to the INTA spokesmen the concession of land titles is very deficient. Only a small minority have permanent titles and in the Raxruhá and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas projects, the majority do not even have provisional titles yet. In trying to explain these facts, these spokesmen point to the low earnings which the parcelarios receive for their products, the high prices they have to pay for land and the impossibility of paying off their debts after borrowing from, among others, the state bank BANDESA. Many of the parcelarios have to sell their land or simply leave after a few years.

In the Raxruhá and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas areas, these problems are aggravated by exhaustion of the land after a few years of cultivation and the resurgence of the war. Not only is the army making the situation dangerous and difficult for the parcelarios but several of them have also been threatened by the guerrilla movement. Even when the parcelarios are successful, the INTA spokesmen and several agricultural extension workers admitted that each household has insufficient land to give each son enough land to start his own household.

The patrimonio agrario colectivo scheme of legalizing access to land is not very successful either. The chaotic state of the land registration systems make it very difficult to find out whether a piece of land actually is a baldío, but this fact cannot hide INTA's inefficiency and inertia. In the case of Xalihá, the villagers started to apply for the legalization of their land in 1977. INTA sent officials to survey the land in 1985 for the first time and subsequently repeated this procedure twice, the villagers having to pay each time. In 1992 INTA offered only small parcels of land on which to build their houses, but it refused to indicate the total amount of land that had been surveyed and what its price would be. In spite of many visits to the central office of INTA in the capital by delegations of the community, the villagers still remain without even provisional titles.

In the case of Chaabilchoch the procedure has been dragging on in a similar way. In this community the villagers have been paying fifty quetzales per household every year since 1984. However, they remain even without provisional titles and INTA officials refuse to tell them the price of the villagers' land. The unlawful - if not corrupt - character of INTA practices is suggested by the Samox case as well. A few years ago an INTA engineer surveyed the land of a neighbouring village. He took away a large part of the land of two Samox villagers and granted it to this neighbouring

community despite the fact that these two Samox villagers have land titles granted by INTA. The Samox villagers assume that their neighbours have bribed the engineer. Corruption is also suggested by the fact that communities in the San Luís Petén and Poptún areas have to pay five per cent interest and other costs, such as value-added tax, in the course of the ten or twenty years during which they are paying off the price of their land.

Even payment of the total price is no guarantee of receiving titles. In 1991, 4,000 households in the department of El Petén had payed the final installment but the president simply refused to sign their titles; moreover he saw no reason to explain his refusal. The year before, INTA had taken over the land title issues from FYDEP, the government agency responsible until then for the development of El Petén, which adds to the land titles confusion. Several respondents mentioned examples of communities which had INTA's permission to work on a piece of land, who had already started to pay INTA, only to find all of a sudden that an aj Kastii appeared with a paper claiming that he had a title to their land provided by FYDEP. In the other settlement areas in Izabal, the Polochic valley and the Franja Transversal del Norte, optimistic estimations by INTA officials hold that half of the communities have provisional land titles while only a small minority have permanent titles. Priests and even mayors in several of the parishes and municipalities in these areas are much more pessimistic in this respect.

Moreover, even the possession of a permanent land title is no guarantee of access to land, as the examples of several communities in Alta Verapaz show.[13] Their permanent titles did not prevent them from being confronted with a landlord presenting a title to the same land granted by the same INTA officials. The landlord has already mobilized the police several times to destroy the villages and capture their leaders.

In short, instead of assisting the Q'eqchi' households and communities in securing their land rights, INTA seriously adds to the confusion and insecurity concerning access to land. This confusion and insecurity not only seriously affect their willingness to invest and to maximize production, it is a major source of human rights violations as well.

DIGESA and DIGESEPE

The next state agencies that intervene in the local Q'eqchi' communities to be discussed below are the *Dirección General de Servicios Agrícolas* (DIGESA) and its sister organization the *Dirección General de Servicios Pecuarios* (DIGESEPE). These two sub-divisions of the ministry of agriculture aim at providing technical assistance to small and medium size peasants and farmers. DIGESA focuses on agrarian production while DIGESEPE concentrates on livestock raising. DIGESA started to work in the Q'eqchi'

[13]. It is not appropriate to give the names of these communities.

region in the early 1970s but for several years, its activities were interrupted by the violence. DIGESA returned in 1985 and since then, its officials have been working throughout the region.[14] DIGESEPE has a similar network of offices and employees, albeit on a much smaller scale.[15]

DIGESA has an agricultural extension worker in at least 22 areas in the Q'eqchi' region. In some of these areas there is also a youth club promoter and a female promoter who work with youth groups and women's groups respectively. The extension worker instructs the peasants and farmers on various agricultural techniques including the use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They teach them how to improve the cultivation of food crops such as maize, and how to diversify their cash crops production of coffee, cardamom, fruits, pepper, achiote and tomatoes. Vegetable production is also promoted. The extension workers train the peasants and farmers on how to maintain the quality of the soil and the wells on their land. In some communities the extension worker manages a small-scale irrigation project. In order to transmit this external knowledge to the peasants and farmers, each extension worker works with four or five communities. He visits each community once a week and organizes a demonstration garden in each community to prove the usefulness of the techniques he advocates. The youth club promoter teaches agricultural techniques to the boys in the same communities and organizes sports events. The female promoter instructs the women on how to take care of children, how to improve hygienic conditions in the house, how to make textiles, how to improve the production and consumption of vegetables and how to make a latrine.

Next to the DIGESA officials themselves who work in the local communities, DIGESA runs the programme of *representantes agrícolas* together with DIGESEPE. These representantes are selected by the extension workers from members of the local communities. They receive training in the areas already mentioned which the extension workers are promoting as well as on the themes favoured by DIGESEPE employees. The representante is supposed to work in his own community as well as in one or two neighbouring ones to which he is expected to pass on the knowledge he received from the extension workers. He is supposed to spend half his time on these tasks and receives a wage.

The real impact of these DIGESA activities is very limited. DIGESA employees work directly in an estimated 85 communities.[16] In line with DIGESA guidelines they work two to three years in each community before

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[14]. This part on DIGESA is based on interviews with DIGESA employees in Cobán, Carchá, Chamelco, Cahabón, Senahú, Panzós, Telemán, La Tinta, Purulhá, Estor, Río Dulce, Raxruhá, Las Casas, and Chahal. Only the DIGESA officials who work in Chisec, Lanquín, Tucurú, and San Luís have not been interviewed. Whether there are DIGESA officials working in Lancetillo, Poptún, Sayaxché and Playa Grande is unknown to me.

[15]. DIGESEPE employees have been interviewed in five different areas.

[16]. Estimate based on the information provided by the extension workers I interviewed.

moving on to another one. However, the extension workers stressed that it takes this number of years just to get acquainted and to gain some degree of acceptance by a community. A spokesman of the central DIGESA office in Cobán estimated the total number of communities involved since the 1970s at about 25 per cent higher than the number of communities with which DIGESA officials are currently working. Even if these were all Q'eqchi' communities, this total of 107 communities would mean that only 6.63 per cent of the Q'eqchi' communities has been reached by this DIGESA programme. Adding the communities that are not attended directly but are only contacted through a representante agrícola, the total number of communities[17] amounts to 250, or just 15.49 per cent of all Q'eqchi' communities. In practice, this percentage is even lower because the DIGESA officials prefer to work with peasants and farmers on a parcelamiento and it has already been shown that non-Q'eqchi'es prevail among them.

The limited impact of DIGESA's work becomes even more apparent if we consider the extension workers' admission that they only work with a minority of peasants and farmers within this small minority of Q'eqchi' communities. Moreover, they complained about the fact that when DIGESA officials stop visiting the community, its members stop practising what they are being taught. This is what happened recently to the oranges project in Xalihá. The local extension worker urged the villagers to dedicate a manzana to plant orange trees and he organized a youth club to look after the trees and oranges. A women's group was also formed to teach the women how to make bread, cotton bags and embroideries. However after some months, the DIGESA promoters stopped coming so the youth club and women's group disintegrated and no one looks after the orange trees any more. According to most of the extension workers, it is very difficult to convince the various communities to apply the advice and techniques they offer.

DIGESA officials attribute the low impact of their work mainly to lack of funds, which undoubtedly makes sense. For example the only means of transportation available to a team of fifteen employees of the Panzós office consists of one motorcycle. The low prices which the Q'eqchi'es receive for new products whenever they diversify their market-oriented production is another problem. The extension workers operating in isolated places especially mentioned this fact.

Nevertheless, poor results are not only due to external factors. DIGESA officials conceive of their work as simply transmitting their knowledge to the communities and show very little interest in the economic strategies, indigenous knowledge and technology of the Q'eqchi'es, let alone in the meanings which the Q'eqchi'es attach to this knowledge and

[17]. Estimate based on official DIGESA figures complemented by the numbers provided by the local extension workers.

technology. They talk about these techniques in a bantering tone.[18] Consequently, no effort is made by DIGESA to look for external technology that would coincide with existing Q'eqchi' technology and economic strategies in order to reinforce these strategies. DIGESA officials do not recognize their own shortcomings in this respect. Instead, they blame Q'eqchi' culture for the poor result of their work. DIGESA officials point to the 'idiosyncrasy' of the Q'eqchi'es, their lack of education, 'the way they are', the fact that almost all of them speak only their own language and their fearful nature in order to explain their reluctance to 'understand' and accept the instructions offered by DIGESA.

This disparaging way of talking about the Q'eqchi'es not only explains a large part of the failure of the DIGESA programmes but it also reminds us that differences and problems between aj Kastii and Q'eqchi'es are easily interpreted by the former in racist terms. It also points to the difference between official objectives - to do their work properly - and actual goals - cultivating good relations with superiors in the hope of getting a transfer to an office with a higher status - a difference found in aj Kastii staffed agencies as outlined in Chapter Two.

DIGESEPE works along the same lines as DIGESA. It runs several schemes of livestock promotion. In one of them it sells, say, ten chickens and two cocks at a reduced price, but DIGESEPE's main work is focused on preventing and curing animal diseases. In Raxruhá, DIGESEPE has a special station financed by funds from France and Canada, and in the year preceding my fieldwork a special project was developed with the assistance of *Veterinarios sin Fronteras* with a fund of 100,000 US dollars donated by the European Union. It resulted in the training of 52 *promotores pecuarios*: promoters whose task is to help the community to raise animals, to provide veterinary medicine when needed and to vaccinate the animals.[19] In the other areas the representantes are taught the same things. In some areas DIGESEPE sells small boxes containing medicine and vaccines to the communities at a price of 100 to 150 quetzales.

Other official development agencies

Besides INTA, DIGESA and DIGESEPE there are several other state agencies working with Q'eqchi' villages, such as ICTA, BANDESA, INDECA, DIGEBOS, ANACAFé, Moscamed, *Caminos Rurales* and UNEPAR.[20]

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[18]. In the next chapter the economic strategies, indigenous knowledge and technology of the Q'eqchi'es and their ways of dealing with inputs and techniques offered by DIGESA for example will be discussed.

[19]. Based on an interview with a DIGESEPE staff member and on AVANCSO 1992: 217.

[20]. Information concerning these agencies has been gathered through interviews with several of their officials and by asking other respondents such as priests and catechists about their operation.

The *Instituto de Ciencia y Tecnología Agrícolas* (ICTA) is doing research on crop cultivation and livestock raising to determine which ones are most suited for the existing natural conditions. ICTA mainly provides DIGESA and DIGESEPE with applied technology to be passed on to the local communities. It has installations in Panzós and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas.

The *Banco Nacional de Desarrollo Agrícola* (BANDESA) is supposed to provide short term loans to peasants and farmers, but in practice its effectiveness is very limited because it only grants loans to those who have land titles. The *Instituto Nacional de Comercialización Agrícola* (INDECA) is even less successful. It is supposed to provide the peasants and farmers with facilities to store their products, but its installations hardly function at all.

DIGEBOS organizes groups in local communities to plant trees, ANACAFé promotes coffee production and Moscamed is responsible for controlling the *mosca mediterranea* and other insects that damage cash crops and livestock. The impact of these agencies is hard to determine. In Chaabilchoch and in Rubelpec there are local groups which plant pine and eucalyptus trees while in Chaabilchoch, two villagers receive a wage for working for Moscamed.

Caminos Rurales builds and maintains roads in the rural areas making use of the labour force of local communities. Not far from Chaabilchoch, it is building a road and pays the villagers a wage of 307 quetzales for a month's work. Despite such efforts, roads in the region are few in number and bad in quality. The limited number of communities that have a drinking water system suggests that the impact of UNEPAR, which is responsible for organizing such systems, should not be exaggerated. A few years ago Chaabilchoch and some neighbouring villages joined together to build a drinking water system, but UNEPAR sold them a worn-out pump that has never functioned.

The army

The most powerful state agency in the area is of course the army, whose operations have not only political but economic consequences as well. In Chapter Two we showed that at the beginning of the 1980s in the conflict-ridden areas, the army disrupted the regional economy and destroyed the economic life of 100 villages and towns. After these scorched earth tactics, the army concentrated on the reconstruction of these villages and towns within the framework of the "development poles" programme. For example in the reconstructed villages and in the town of Chisec the army, supported by other state agencies, managed to provide corrugated iron sheets, electricity and drinking water. The army gave "food for work" to those who were forced to reconstruct the villages and the town. INTA was mobilized to

survey plots of land to enable every household to build their house as part of a *reducciones*-like scheme.[21]

Apart from these efforts to control the local population, no special attention has been paid to the area as far as development is concerned. The governor of Alta Verapaz told a team from the research centre CEIDEC in 1986 or 1987 that, though the usual government institutions are there in Chisec, this did not mean that they were working better than in any other place.[22] My interviews with spokesmen for the municipality and state agencies conducted in 1991 confirm the view that in this area, nothing special has been done to promote economic development.

At present, the most important way in which the army influences the local economy in the communities is to force young men to spend up to two years in military service and to coerce adult men in many areas in the Q'eqchi' region to serve about one in every ten days in the civil patrols (see Chapter Two). From an economic point of view, this is a waste of time. In short, the economic influence of the army is purely negative.

6.2.4 *Para-statal agencies and NGOs*

Next to state agencies there are several para-statal organizations and a few NGOs which intervene in the economy of the local Q'eqchi' communities. However, compared to other regions in Guatemala such as the western highlands, the presence of NGOs in the Q'eqchi' region is very limited. Several employees of NGOs with offices in the capital attributed their absence from the Q'eqchi' region to the distance from the capital, the poor infrastructure and the fact that only very few Q'eqchi'es speak Spanish forcing the NGO employees to learn Q'eqchi'. The para-statal organizations and NGOs that will be discussed here are FEDECOVERA, INACOP, INTECAP, *Vitamina "A"*, *Proyecto Quetzal*, and *Defensores de la Naturaleza*.

FEDECOVERA and INACOP

The *Federación de Cooperativas de las Verapaces* (FEDECOVERA) and the *Instituto Nacional de Cooperativas* (INACOP) are the two main agencies working with the various cooperatives in the Q'eqchi' region. The former is an independent organization and the latter is a para-statal one.

FEDECOVERA has its origins in the fincas nacionales, *i.e.* the dispossessed fincas that had not been returned to their German owners after World War Two. After 1968 these fincas were transformed into cooperatives of the former mozos colonos and FEDECOVERA was founded as a formally independent federation of these cooperatives. These are production cooperatives which means that the land is collectively owned and cultivated

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[21]. AVANCSO 1992: 177.
[22]. CEIDEC 1990: 172-175.

by the members. They have gone on with coffee production and started to grow cardamom. The federation has 24 such participating cooperatives in the municipalities of Cobán, Carchá, Senahú and Purulhá with a membership of more than 5,500. Funded by USAID, it provides technical assistance for agricultural production, has facilities to process and store their products, assists in management and administrative tasks and grants credits to the cooperatives.[23] INACOP provides similar services (technical assistance, administrative support and credits) to the same as well as to other cooperatives.[24] By far the majority of cooperatives to which it grants assistance are agricultural production cooperatives, but there are consumer and credit cooperatives as well among them.

Any assessment of the impact of FEDECOVERA and INACOP must unavoidably be influenced by the fact that most cooperatives in the Q'eqchi' areas are in a deplorable state. In any case, neither agency has been able to prevent these cooperatives from ending up this way. Those that were established on the former fincas nacionales and are members of FEDECOVERA present a particularly lamentable picture. Almost all of them have enormous debts, are internally divided and unable to make a profit. For example according to several sources, the cooperative of Campur, which has more than a thousand members, has debts of between 300,000 and 500,000 quetzales and its operations are seriously hampered by internal factions.

Several explanations of these problems have been put forward.[25] On the one hand, from the start these cooperatives were objects of political strife between the political parties, INTA and other government agencies about who was to exercise control over them and, more specifically, who should be appointed as administrator. At the times of massive violence, the army has assumed control of the cooperatives. The political strife is one of the causes of the internal divisions. Motives other than the interests of the cooperatives have tended to prevail in their management resulting in lack of efficiency, corruption and rising debt problems.

On the other hand, several spokesmen pointed out that the Q'eqchi'es in these cooperatives do not feel very responsible for their operation. We must remember that these cooperatives were formed, not as an initiative of those who became their members, but as a result of government policy. Moreover, in general the purely collective control over and cultivation of land in the case of production cooperatives does not respond to the mixed communitarian and individual forms of control and labour which the

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[23]. Data of 1991 provided by a FEDECOVERA spokesman.

[24]. Information on INACOP was collected by conducting interviews with INACOP spokesmen in their offices in Poptún, Cobán and Cahabón. INACOP has more offices in Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and in Tucurú.

[25]. Spokesmen of INACOP, FEDECOVERA and of the Catholic church.

Q'eqchi'es generally prefer (see next chapter). INACOP officials admitted that a considerable number of official cooperatives are not functioning.

In short, the FEDECOVERA cooperatives show that cooperatives formed as the result of intervention by state agencies have not been successful. INACOP provides assistance to some cooperatives founded by the communities themselves, but in general cooperatives are not very successful among the Q'eqchi'es.

INTECAP and Vitamina "A"

Another agency providing the Q'eqchi'es with technical instruction is the *Instituto Técnico de Capacitación y Productividad* (INTECAP).[26] INTECAP receives twenty per cent of its budget from the ministry of labour and eighty per cent from the employers' organization, the *Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras* (CACIF). INTECAP has been working in the Q'eqchi' region since 1972 and has twenty instructors. At the request of individual communities, they organize courses on bread baking, forestry, agriculture, livestock raising, textile making, confectionery, carpentry and other skills.

According to the director of the INTECAP office in Cobán, the results of these courses are unsatisfying because there are no resources to buy materials and no loans available to help participants start their own workshops. Moreover, the participants have to be able to read and write and examinations are in Spanish, all of which preclude a large majority of Q'eqchi'es from taking part in these courses.

Vitamina "A" is financed by USAID and promotes the cultivation of vegetables and instructs women on how to prepare them. Twice a year its employees distribute vitamin pills and deworming liquids in 22 villages in the Carchá and Chamelco areas. According to the Vitamina "A" coordinator, ten per cent of the villagers follow the advice of the project employees while the project is still going on. What will happen when the project comes to an end as planned after three years is hard to say.

Proyecto Quetzal and Defensores de la Naturaleza

Economic and ecological matters in the region are very much interrelated. Because of land scarcity and the very unequal land distribution, ever more marginal lands are cleared for agricultural use. Deforestation increasingly threatens ecological conditions. Apart from DIGEBOS, there are two NGOs which recently started to work on ecological improvement: the Proyecto Quetzal and the Defensores de la Naturaleza. Both try to preserve the

[26]. Information based on an interview with the director of the Cobán office of INTECAP.

remaining forests on the mountain ranges on both sides of the Polochic valley.

In 1990, the government proclaimed an extensive part of the Sierra de las Minas as a protected natural reserve, limiting cultivation and settlement by peasants in several parts of the reserve. Funded by the World Wildlife Foundation, Defensores de la Naturaleza started to work in those parts of the reserve. Their method is based on intensifying food production to enable the peasants to dedicate more land to reforestation and soil conservation. They focus on the use of natural fertilizers, on cultivating products in specific sequences on the same plots of land, on ploughing in furrows and the like. In this way Defensores work in six communities and, according to its promoters, the productivity of the households involved is increasing significantly, though the effects on tree planting has been limited. In any case, it is still too early to measure the results of the programme.

6.2.5 *Churches*

As mentioned in Chapter Three, churches feel they have a role to play not only in Q'eqchi' religion but in their economy as well. Evangelical churches and the Salesians encourage the Q'eqchi'es to optimize their economic performance, both in subsistence and in market-oriented production and activities. The Mennonite church has small-scale agricultural training and drinking water projects in the Carchá and Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas areas. The Nazarene church runs charity projects to help widows and orphans as well as drinking water projects. However, the evangelical projects in the region are limited in number and scope.

The Salesians have many small-scale economic activities such as making loans to local communities and buying chemical fertilizers at reduced prices; they also organize meetings of the villagers to allow employees of state agencies to promote their technology. Moreover the boys who are trained in the Salesian boarding schools to work as teachers in the 129 Salesian-run primary schools are expected to instruct the villagers in these communities on external agricultural technology. The Salesians promote an instrumentalist view of production factors such as land and labour and believe in progress through the adoption of external technology. Indigenous technology and knowledge are looked down upon. The Salesians also try to keep the local communities from becoming involved in land conflicts with a landowner or with INTA.

The Department of Social Pastoral Work of the bishopric of Verapaz as well as several diocesan institutions in El Petén and several parishes promote a variety of economic projects that meet the criteria of liberating pastoral work. According to these criteria the whole community must be involved. The project should help the community solve its own problems, to avoid creating a dependent attitude vis-à-vis external agencies, and to increase its technical and management capacities. External techniques and

knowledge are supposed to complement and not replace indigenous knowledge and technology.

In keeping with these criteria, the Department of Social Pastoral Work in Cobán works with communities of displaced people who came down from the mountains after hiding from the army. It has secured or purchased land for these people, delivered materials to build houses and community halls, developed productive projects such as offering a loan to buy some calves, and it has provided technical assistance to improve their agricultural productivity. In addition, the Department is involved in the Yalpemex settlement project involving several hundred refugees who returned from Honduras in 1991.

Apart from these integrated projects focusing on those who have returned after hiding inside or outside of the country, the Department has several projects in other communities which, in one way or another, have been affected by violence. These communities suffer not only from the physical impact of destruction but from its social effects as well. A considerable number of communities remain divided between those who returned after having spent several years in the mountains, and those who remained behind and had to stay in army camps for several months. In these communities the Department has developed projects such as finding funds to enable them to buy land or to construct a cardamom dryer, as well as technical assistance. These projects are meant to encourage the various factions in these communities to overcome their mutual distrust by working together in practical ways. Only in the parish of San Martín (Cobán) has the Department developed these kinds of projects in 32 communities.[27] In doing so it has received support from several Guatemalan based NGOs.

In 1988 the Department created an office to provide legal assistance to the countless communities involved in land conflicts. Communities can rely on the office for legal support to claim their rights in accordance with Guatemalan law. This service has created high expectations among the Q'eqchi' communities and every day there are representatives of local communities visiting the office. Some communities even organized a march on Cobán protesting against the abuse of power by a landlord and have received food and shelter from the Department. The Vicariate of El Petén has its own lawyer who visits the parishes every two months to provide similar services.

In cases of land conflicts Mgr. Flores Reyes takes a courageous stand in favour of the community and sometimes even grabs the microphone of radio Tezulutlán to publicly denounce the landlord. The office regularly sends its employees to the INTA headquarters in the capital to investigate land issues and to accelerate and monitor bureaucratic procedures. The office's possibilities are limited, though, because of legal restrictions imposed

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[27]. Information referring to 1992 and before.

by Guatemalan law. In the end a successful outcome depends on government institutions such as INTA and its funds for granting loans to buy land are limited. According to several priests, these limitations have created some disappointments on the part of communities in their parishes.

Another initiative of the Department is the creation of a network of multiplicadores de pastoral social which link local communities to the Department. The multiplicadores are trained by the Department in approximately three courses of several days every year. These courses have three standard elements. First, the official ecclesiastical sources that deal with social problems are presented, such as the official social doctrine of the church and the letter of the Guatemalan bishops' conference called *El Clamor por la Tierra* of 1988. Here the bishops severely criticize the appalling inequality of land distribution in Guatemala which allows a small minority of landlords to control a vast proportion of the land while by far a majority of the peasants have insufficient land at their disposal. In addition, the bishops condemn the exploitation which goes on in the estates of the landlords and call for a drastic land reform.[28]

A second element of the courses refers to the rights of the Q'eqchi'es as Guatemalan citizens in accordance with Guatemalan law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The fact that most of the Q'eqchi'es are not familiar with these rights still encourages the state and landowners to abuse them. As a third element, the multiplicadores are taught practical technologies such as how to make natural fertilizers out of waste products or how to avoid damaging the ecological balance.

It still is too soon to evaluate the effects of the multiplicadores project, because it started only in 1990. Nevertheless, two years later it had established a network of representatives of more than one hundred local communities. The multiplicadores made an evaluation of the combined effects of the three standard ingredients of their instruction and found them very positive; in some cases they were even able to stimulate their communities to take practical action. The initiative of the four communities in El Petén and the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas area that bought a truck to transport their rice grew out of this programme. The programme of multiplicadores constitutes the only initiative meant to articulate the economic efforts of various local communities, legitimizing their indigenous knowledge and economic strategies.[29]

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[28]. For a discussion on this and other letters of the bishops on social matters and the reactions of various social organizations see Samandú, Siebers, Sierra 1990: 146-158.

[29]. There was an earlier initiative called *Qawa quk'a* linking local communities. The idea was to encourage local communities to replace products that they used to buy by items they are able to produce themselves using indigenous technology and local materials (see Wilson 1993: 124-125). This initiative had no institutional back-up from the Catholic church such as the multiplicadores have and had only a short-lived existence. This short-lived existence and the fact that only a limited number of Q'eqchi'es participated, as several of my sources confirmed, seriously question Wilson's assertion that this initiative

Nevertheless, the project has its limits as well. The parishes run by the Salesian priests do not participate. Problems have arisen with comisionados militares and civil patrols in several communities because the villagers are becoming aware that - contrary to what the army is telling them - they are not obliged by law to join these patrols. The Department encourages the communities to develop a critical attitude towards social reality and to solve their own problems, but to avoid violent conflicts with the state. To be realistic the Catholic church is the only institution that has the power to create the space for the development of such a network of representatives of local communities to deal with delicate subjects such as human rights and social injustice, but the margins for doing so remain limited.

An additional social task in which the diocese of Verapaz is engaged is the running of a boarding school called *Centro de Formación II* in San Juan Chamelco. In a 150 day period, about 120 boys between the age of 15 and 25 from all over the bishopric receive training in technical skills such as carpentry, bricklaying, and shoemaking. After passing the final examinations, they are offered a loan to enable them to buy the tools they need to start a workshop in their community of origin. This centre is financed by foreign aid, owned by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development and managed by the church. It shows that relations between the diocese and the state are not strictly antagonistic. Where possible and desirable, the bishopric is willing to engage in joint efforts with the state.

6.3 Local economic leaders

The economic actors and agencies already discussed not only intervene in the local communities directly, their influence is also mediated by local leaders. These leaders play a prominent role in the economic life of the community and deal with the intervening actors and agencies. They can be subdivided into committees and individual leaders. The most important committee is the Local Development Committee, or Improvement Committee, which coordinates other committees.

Local Development Committee

The existence of the *Comité de Desarrollo Local* (Local Development Committee) is a result of the policy of president Vinicio Cerezo who, in 1987 and 1988, tried to set up a nation-wide network of development committees at the national, regional, departmental, district council and local community

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proves that there is a retreat to economic conservatism, a strategy of autarky and a reaction to market-integration among the Q'eqchi'es (Wilson 1995: 284-293). Such sweeping generalizations cannot stand up to a more systematic analysis of Q'eqchi' economic strategies: see next chapter.

levels. It was meant to become the local executive agency for the development policies formulated within this network.[30]

In practice, in many communities its predecessor, the *Comité Pro Mejoramiento* (Improvement Committee), was simply renamed the Local Development Committee, and the existing practice of one committee looking after the common economic interests of the local community went on under another banner. In almost all the communities which I studied in detail, the names Development Committee and Improvement Committee are used interchangeably to refer to the same committee. The local communities have been able to turn this government initiative to their own advantage, which has certainly been enhanced by the fact that the network of development committees at the levels indicated above has died a silent death. There are simply no policies coming out of this network to be transmitted to the communities.

The committee usually consists of a president, a vice-president and three or four other members who are elected by the members of the local community from those belonging to it. They have to ensure that at least some members of the committee are able to read and write and speak Spanish in order to deal with intervening agencies. In Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec the members of the committee stay on as long as they want to, but in Xalihá the community elects its members every one or two years.

The committee is in charge of important matters that concern the community. First, in communities formed in the last few decades that have organized their land within a patrimonio agrario colectivo scheme, such as Chaabilchoch, Samox and Xalihá, the committee represents the community in its dealings with INTA. It meets INTA officials, holds the land titles and has to approve land sales within the community.

Secondly, in these communities the committee assigns the various plots of land to individual households. It usually does so during the formative years of the community and afterwards, it sees to it that conflicts are settled and newcomers discouraged to establish themselves. The committee can be very harsh in this respect. In Samox it gave the evangelical household only half the land to which it is officially entitled. A man from another household had to accept a loan from a cooperative in La Tinta to cover the expenses of treating his wife's illness. He did not repay in time and the cooperative wanted to take away two of his manzanas. The committee refused to accept this, paid his debt and took all his land. In Xalihá the committee gave only 18 *cuerdas*[31] to a villager who recently returned after living in Belize for twenty years. The average household in Xalihá cultivates some 60 cuerdas each year and uses the same plot of land every four or five years. Thus, this villager would have needed between 240

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[30]. See Inforpress Centroamericana 1988: 113.

[31]. A cuerda equals 436.7 square metres.

and 300 cuerdas to be in the same position as the average household. His 18 cuerdas certainly did not encourage him to stay in the village.

A third task of the committee in these communities is to organize collective work on community land. Chaabilchoch has no community land which is dedicated to agricultural purposes, but the committee in Xalihá has reserved between five and ten manzanas for cultivation by the community in addition to the plots that have been assigned to the households. Samox has 0.87 manzana of such community land. Cash crop production on these community lands has allowed the villagers of both communities to buy a considerable part of the materials to build an attractive church. However in recent years, the committees in both communities have been unable to mobilize the villagers to do this community work because their two presidents are highly conflictive persons. In Xalihá the villagers chose someone to become president because he was one of the few villagers who spoke Spanish, but neighbours do not help him to cultivate his land and when he built his house recently, no one showed up to help him. Besides, there are rumours about the supposed disappearance of 4,000 quetzales of community funds. In Samox the president simply refuses to step down from his post.

In the Q'eqchi' heartland communities that have a long history, and in the communities within the parcelamiento projects with individualized land rights, the tasks of the committee are much more limited.

Other committees

Other tasks of the Local Development Committee are to mobilize the men of the community to clean and maintain the trails and the community buildings and to supervise other committees that are dedicated to special tasks. There are drinking water committees in all the villages I visited though only Samox and Rubelpec have a functioning drinking water system. In Chaabilchoch there is a road construction committee which recruits the men of the village to work in the nearby Caminos Rurales project. Rubelpec has committees for the cooperative, the bakery, the DIGEBOS project, electricity and the construction of a community hall.

The committee that manages the cooperative in Rubelpec is elected every two years by the members of the cooperative. There are some 60 members who have to pay 50 quetzales to become a member. At the end of the year, INACOP officials help the committee do the bookkeeping and the profits or losses are shared by the members.

The cooperative started eleven years ago and has a pleasant building made of brick. It is a consumer cooperative which means that it buys groceries in the nearby towns and sells them to the villagers. It also has a grounding mill to make maize flour. The cooperative started as an initiative of the villagers themselves and since then it has proved to be sustainable and profitable. It employs two men, including one of the ministros, on a

permanent basis and they have a strong influence on what goes on in the cooperative. In recent years it has had to face competition from several private grocery shops run by individual households.

The cooperative shows that the villagers are willing to make the best out of market integration. This conclusion holds true for both men and women. Several years ago the women in Rubelpec started their own bakery in the cooperative building and some of them received training by INTECAP employees on how to make bread. However at the moment, the bakery is no longer very successful. The people in the community do not like the taste of its bread, there is some discord among the women who run the bakery and several leading men, including those who run the cooperative, oppose the work of these women. This public role of women meets with resistance.

Recently, DIGEBOS organized a committee in Rubelpec to take charge of a reforestation project. There is a group of fifteen villagers which meets every week with a DIGEBOS official. They run a small nursery garden to grow pine and eucalyptus trees and the villagers are supposed to plant the larger trees on their land and take care of them. Members of the DIGEBOS committee claim that some 5,000 trees have already been planted.

Individual leaders

In addition to the various committees there are several individual leaders who influence the economic practices and representations of the Q'eqchi'es and who are related to intervening agencies. The most important of these are the representante agrícola, the veterinarian promoter, representatives of NGOs such as Vitamina "A" and the multiplicador de pastoral social.

In the communities that I studied in detail, only Rubelpec has a representante agrícola. He works for both DIGESA and DIGESEPE in this village as well as three nearby communities and receives a wage of 300 quetzales a month. As part of his DIGESA work, he encourages the villagers to cultivate vegetables, to plant their maize and beans in furrows and increase the number of plants per square metre, to build pigs sties and chicken coops and to use natural and chemical fertilizers. Two households offered him a few cuerdas to lay out a demonstration garden. His DIGESEPE work focuses on the vaccination of animals, to cure animal diseases and he promotes two projects focusing on raising chickens and cows.

In Chaabilchoch there are three veterinarian promoters who encourage livestock raising. They have been trained by Veterinarios sin Fronteras and DIGESEPE in Raxruhá and French coordinators of the programme have visited the community several times in recent years. Like the representante agrícola in Rubelpec, these promoters vaccinate and cure sick animals.

In Rubelpec the representante agrícola is also the coordinator of the Vitamina "A" project. He coordinates a group of eleven voluntary workers who work in as many sectors of the community. They encourage the

households in their sector to build latrines, take hygienic measures, grow vegetables and take vitamin pills and deworming liquids. They hold meetings with these households every two weeks.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ECONOMIC FIELD:

PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES OF THE Q'EQCHI'ES

7.1 Introduction

Whatever the influence of intervening actors and agencies or local leaders, in the end "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es have to rely on themselves for economic survival. This chapter focuses on their economic practices and strategies.

The discussion of economic practices draws mainly on data collected for the year 1991-1992 starting at the beginning of the maize-growing cycle in March. Figures for maize production, for example, or income earned from wage labour refer to that year. However, additional reliable information that enables this analysis to transcend the picture for one specific year has been incorporated. For example, as regards forms of labour - individual, group-wise or communitarian labour; commoditized or non-commoditized labour[1] - I asked my respondents not just what they did last year, but also what they do in general. Specific information concerning economic changes which have taken place in recent decades, such as the decrease in forced labour and the introduction and rapid spread of cardamom production is available; several respondents confirmed this information independently of each other.

For practical reasons discussed in Chapter One this analysis focuses mainly on Q'eqchi'es in villages rather than on mozos colonos, members of cooperatives or town dwellers. Information was obtained from interviews with members of individual households in the four villages that were studied in detail and from respondents who have a regional overview of economic activities. The latter include agricultural extension workers and priests for example.

The purpose of discussing economic practices is to provide the groundwork for delineating the general lines of the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies. This chapter does not pretend to present an exhaustive analysis of every economic practice. Such an analysis would oblige me to outline the contents of the various bodies of indigenous knowledge and their

[1]. For definitions of these labour forms see sections 7.2.2 and 7.3.3.

relationship with externally provided bodies of knowledge, including technology.[2]

Unlike Chapter Four on Q'eqchi' religion the present chapter on Q'eqchi' economy focuses mainly on practices. The emphasis is not so much on discourse and meaning, but rather on what the Q'eqchi'es do and on the common denominators of their practices, in other words on their economic strategies. The strategies will be deduced mainly from the practices; respondents were able only to outline individual elements of these strategies, not the strategies themselves. The strategies have been constructed articulating individual meanings and practices.

The present chapter begins with a discussion of the main economic activities of the Q'eqchi'es. Next, the general characteristics of their economic strategies and the ways in which these characteristics are interrelated with Q'eqchi' religion will be presented. In the next chapter the question will be raised whether the main characteristics of their economic strategies can be classified using the concepts pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern, and the issue of economic power will be dealt with.

7.2 Q'eqchi' economic practices

The following section will focus on the Q'eqchi'es' economic practices. These practices will be discussed in the following sequence: organization of access to land, labour, subsistence production and market-integration, external inputs, consumption and savings; finally the question of economic stratification among Q'eqchi' households will be addressed.

7.2.1 *Organization of access to land*

The general pattern of access to land in the four villages I studied in detail includes three elements. First of all, there is the community land administered or worked by the local development committee. In the preceding chapter it was pointed out that until recently the committee in Xalihá and Samox organized the joint tilling of this land. In Chaabilchoch no community land is tilled, but there are two football pitches, land on which churches have been built and some land dedicated to become the local market square. Rubelpec has only small plots of land on which the cooperative building, the community hall and the Catholic church have been built.

Secondly, there are common waste lands. These lands belong to the community, but are not used for cultivation or building. They are the least

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[2]. This approach has been followed by several authors on farmers' and peasants' economic practices and representations. The book by Chambers, Pacey, Thrupp (eds.) 1989 presents an excellent example of this approach.

fertile, most difficult to work on because of the rocky soil or steep slopes. Nevertheless, these lands do play an important role in the local economy. They are used to collect firewood, wax and copal pom. The villagers graze their cows, bulls and horses on these lands and they are an important source of building materials. If these lands are extensive enough the villagers use them for hunting wild animals, and sometimes important wells are sunk on them.

Thirdly, there are plots of land that have been allocated to or are just used by individual households. These lands include plots on which houses have been built, those that are used for agricultural purposes or that are lying fallow at present. As was mentioned above, INTA encourages the villagers to build their houses on concentrated plots in the village centres, but of the four villages that I studied in detail this policy had been successful only in Chaabilchoch.

Most of the household lands are used for agricultural purposes in a shifting pattern of cultivation. This pattern is rather complicated. It includes plots of land on which cash crops such as coffee and cardamom have been cultivated for several years because these crops have a cycle of between three and seven years. Next to these plots there are parcels on which crops with a much shorter cycle, such as maize, which has one or two harvests each year, are cultivated. In addition, some plots are left fallow in order to recover their fertility after being tilled for one or more years. The pattern of land rotation responds to both the need to cultivate a variety of crops and the requirements of fertility recovery.

Levels of market-integration, population pressure and scarcity of land determine how intensively or extensively this pattern is followed. In Xalihá the rotation scheme is very extensive. On average each piece of land is left fallow for three or four years, or in some cases up to seven years. Most of the land is fallow. The villagers of Xalihá do not apply this rotation pattern to a fixed and circumscribed total amount of land. They do not know the exact limits of the land each household has access to. Due to the relatively low levels of population pressure and market-integration this extensive scheme is common in most of the settlement areas of El Petén and Izabal. In these areas it is not uncommon to find Q'eqchi' households with access to up to one caballería.

In Rubelpec, on the other hand, fallow land is scarce and the rotation scheme is applied in a framework of a near permanent cultivation. In this community every villager knows exactly which plots of land he or she has access to and this access is legalized in terms of individual land titles. This intensive land rotation is common in villages in the central areas of the Q'eqchi' heartland around the towns of Santo Domingo Cobán, San Pedro Carchá and San Juan Chamelco. These areas are characterized by relatively high population pressure, severe scarcity of land and relatively easy access to markets. Market access may encourage the villagers to dedicate part of their lands to the production of cash crops.

In Xalihá the villagers do not use all the land that is available to them while in Rubelpec there are quite a number of conflicts between neighbouring households, even within kinship lines. In terms of population pressure, access to markets, the intensity of the rotation pattern and the occurrence of internal land conflicts Chaabilchoch and Samox occupy an intermediate position between Xalihá and Rubelpec. Table 7.1 shows the different intensities of application of the land rotation pattern in the various communities in terms of the percentage of land the average household had access to that was actually tilled by themselves or by others and the percentage of the land left fallow in 1992.

Table 7.1: average land use patterns at household level in four villages (in manzanas and percentages)[3]

Average land use per household	Xalihá	Chaabil-choch	Samox	Rubelpec
Tilled	3.78 (20.58 %)	6.62 (41.40 %)	4.34 (58.02 %)	0.97 (50.26 %)
Leased out	0	0.46 (2.88 %)	0.07 (0.94 %)	0.35 (18.13 %)
Left fallow	14.59 (79.42 %)	8.91 (55.72 %)	3.07 (41.04 %)	0.61 (31.61 %)
Total average land per household	18.37 (100 %)	15.99 (100 %)	7.48 (100 %)	1.93 (100 %)

This table also points to the fact that land scarcity is most severe in Rubelpec and least problematic in Xalihá, with Samox and Chaabilchoch in between. Despite the fact that there is a relatively large amount of land available in Xalihá the villagers till a relatively small proportion of it. Poor infrastructure and relative isolation of the village are the main reasons why the villagers are not tempted to use much land for the cultivation of cash crops.

Differences in access to land are noticeable not only between the various communities, within these communities there are considerable differences as well. In Xalihá these differences are not due to any real scarcity of land at present, but the fact that the committee gave only 1.13 manzanas to a villager who recently returned to the community indicates that limits on the available arable land are becoming discernible. In the other three villages all the available arable land has been allocated to the

[3]. Calculations based on relevant data provided to me by 40, 39, 39 and 64 respondents in the villages of Xalihá, Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec respectively.

households - except for small pieces of land that are directly administered by the committee - and the differences between these households are considerable. In each of the communities there are households with no land at all whereas in Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec the largest land-holding households have 31.25, 20 and 15.63 manzanas respectively. In Rubelpec in particular the maximum is very great given the fact that the average size of household plot is only 1.93 manzanas. Rubelpec also has 19 households who have no land at all.

Of course, the quantity of land allocated to each community or household is important, but equally important is its quality or fertility. In Xalihá fertility varies considerably between the lower and higher parts of the village. Rice grows very well in the former and very poorly in the latter. The opposite is true of maize, but the average maize production per manzana (19.49 quintales) is well above the standard measure used by the Department of Social Pastoral Work in Cobán for fertile lands (12 or 13 quintales per manzana). In Chaabilchoch the land is very suited to maize production, but this is not the case in Samox and Rubelpec. However, cardamom and coffee grow quite well in Samox.

In principle, the household can compensate for its limited access to fertile land by using external inputs to improve the productivity of its land. These inputs will be discussed below. It may also resort to renting or buying land from others within the community or elsewhere. The average amount of land per household rented within the community or elsewhere or bought outside of their community as well as the total amount of land tilled by average household inside or outside their community are listed in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: average amounts of land the households of three villages rent within their community and elsewhere, own and till elsewhere and the total land they till (in manzanas)[4]

Average land per household	Chaabilchoch	Samox	Rubelpec
Rented in the village	0.21	0.07	0.35
Rented elsewhere	0.12	0.46	0.18
Owned and tilled elsewhere	0.03	0.28	0.05
Total land household tills inside and outside the village	6.98	5.15	1.55

As a result of the relative availability of land in Xalihá the villagers do not need to own land elsewhere or to rent land in the village. They do not lease

[4]. Calculations based on relevant data provided to me by 40, 39, 39 and 64 respondents in the villages of Xalihá, Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec respectively.

out land either. In Chaabilchoch ten villagers rent land in a nearby village, but the land scarcity is not severe enough to prevent some 20 outsiders coming to the village to rent one manzana each. In both Samox and Rubelpec the majority of households rent land (26 and 68 respectively) and no land is leased out to outsiders. Almost all the villagers of Samox (23) rent plots of land in the lower part of the Polochic valley. In Rubelpec most villagers rent in the community, but some rent or have bought land in places as far away as the Polochic valley and the Franja Transversal del Norte. The land which is rented or bought is used almost exclusively to grow maize. Those with no land or a relatively small plot rent land in order to secure their maize production. As a result, every household in the villages which I studied in detail has some access to land, either inside or outside their community, owned or rented.

Renting land takes place on various terms which can be classified into three categories: no reward at all, exchange of labour, products or land, and monetary exchange. In the first case land is not considered to be a commodity. In the second case it is considered to be so: something to be exchanged for something else. In the third case land is not only commoditized but also conceived of in monetary terms. The various terms that are used are listed in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: terms on which land is rented in three villages (in percentage of deals)[5]

Terms of land rental	Rubelpec	Chaabilchoch	Samox
No reward	27.03 %	7.69 %	-
Sharecropping	-	30.77 %	-
Exchange of products or land	-	-	8.00 %
Work for the owner	62.16 %	38.46 %	8.00 %
Paying money	10.81 %	23.08 %	84.00 %

These data point to the conclusion that Chaabilchoch occupies an intermediate position between Samox and Rubelpec. In Samox rental deals are predominantly monetary while in Rubelpec only a small proportion are.

[5]. Based on 37, 13 and 25 respondents who rent or lease out land in the communities of Rubelpec, Chaabilchoch and Samox respectively. In Samox two respondents give part of their cardamom production or lease out a piece of their land on which cardamom can be produced in exchange for renting land in the valley which they use to produce maize. The category "work for the owner" means that the one who rents clears another piece of land for the owner.

In Rubelpec most rental deals are commoditized though a significant proportion are concluded in terms of personal favours. The latter take place mainly between members of the same family or kinship line.

The fact that rental deals depend on personal relations was also attested to by one of the villagers of Chaabilchoch. He is the only villager who does not belong to a church and he left his wife a few years ago. He is certainly not the most respected person in the village and has to pay 160 quetzales to rent a manzana while the average payment in Chaabilchoch is 93.76 quetzales per manzana. Even in Samox personal relations continue to play an important role in rental deals. The villagers are able to rent a piece of land in another village in the valley if they have a good personal relation with the person they rent from. Not just anyone can rent a piece of land in the valley. Moreover, in every village several respondents told me that it is the responsibility of the community to provide each household with access to at least a small piece of land, whether as property or rented from other villagers.

In short, rental agreements are not standardized. The ways the Q'eqchi'es deal with rented land should be seen in mixture of personalized, commoditized and monetarized terms.

Land control

In each community the land is divided into community land, common waste land and household land - the latter can be leased out - but in the four villages which I studied in detail the land is controlled in a mixed communitarian and individual household way. Each village has pieces of community land which together with the common waste land is administered by a committee elected by the community. Individual households have free access to the common waste land to forage for things they need and specific plots of land have been allocated to the households. In Xalihá, Chaabilchoch and Samox the committees can interfere in household plots in cases where the household wants to sell land or is not able to fulfil its obligations towards the community.

The committees in Xalihá and Samox are quite influential, but the committee in Rubelpec has very little to do with land issues. It does not interfere in land conflicts and has no influence on land transactions among households. As a result it has not been able to keep several aj Kastii from buying quite large plots of land in Rubelpec and using this land in a very extensive way. The high level of individualization of land control in Rubelpec has thus aggravated the land shortage the Q'eqchi' villagers have to face. One respondent expressed regret for the high level of individualization of land control in Rubelpec in these words: 'We all have our lands, but perhaps this is a sin because all of us will die equal'.

7.2.2 *Labour*

As with land use and land control there is a balance between individual households and the community as regards labour. Each individual household performs certain tasks but others are carried out jointly. In terms of jointly performed activities a distinction can be made between labour that is done by the whole community on the one hand and labour done by groups of ten to twenty community members on the other. In the former case the whole male population is recruited to carry out tasks that are the responsibility of the community as a whole. In the latter case a group of villagers joins the man of the household to do work for the benefit of that household. The next day or occasion the same group joins the man of another household. In short, three forms of labour can be distinguished: individual, group-wise and communitarian. In the following pages these categories will be used to classify the most important aspects of labour in Q'eqchi' households and communities.

Division of labour within the household

In the various villages I studied in detail there were considerable differences in the division of labour between men and women within households. Nevertheless, all of them share common features. Women look after the children, keep the house clean, wash the clothes, prepare the food, make kitchen utensils, fetch water and firewood, and take care of the birds (chickens, ducks, turkeys) and the smaller food crops (beans, chillis). Women also take a hand in clearing the land and harvesting maize - widows may perform these tasks - but they are never allowed to plant maize. All these activities are performed by individual women within their own households. They take virtually no part in group-wise or communitarian labour forms in performing these tasks.

In general women are supposed to focus on activities within the household, but in every community I studied in detail they were involved in activities that entail market-integration to a greater or lesser extent. In Xalihá the surplus of chillis and birds, *i.e.* quantities not consumed within the household, is sold on the market in San Agustín Chahal; but it is men who take these products to market. In Chaabilchoch and Samox quite a few women sell these products at the nearest market and buy grocery products there.

The involvement of women in market-oriented activities is relatively high in Rubelpec. They buy firewood from traders, for example, because the common waste land is not extensive enough to supply all the households with sufficient firewood. The chicken raising project supported by DIGESEPE aimed at selling these birds in nearby San Pedro Carchá is a women's project. Women make a considerable number of *huipiles*, *i.e.* the typical white blouses Q'eqchi' women wear, and sell them in the same

nearby town. In Rubelpec there are even five households whose mother and daughters go to this town to select cardamom for wage labour. In the same village women are quite heavily involved in clearing land and harvesting maize because many men are away for a large part of the year working as travelling merchants or wage labourer.

In short, women mainly focus on labour within the households, but in all four villages they are involved in some sort of market-oriented activities. This involvement is most pronounced in Rubelpec and least developed in Xalihá, with Samox and Chaabilchoch in between. Almost all these activities are performed on an individual basis. Women work in a communitarian way when, for example, food has to be prepared for a community feast. Food is prepared by a group of several women when men perform a particular task as a group as well.

Men are mainly responsible for tilling the land, grow the main food (maize) and cash crops (cardamom and coffee), take care of the larger animals (pigs, cattle, horses), sell cash crops and animals, work for wages and carry out most of the commercial activities. They also build the houses, make the furniture and take care of most of the contacts with the outside world. In doing so the men practise a variety of labour forms. We have already come across the communitarian labour in which until recently the whole adult male population of Samox and Xalihá was engaged tilling community land. The local development committee and other committees also recruit men for other purposes such as building churches or village halls, and the so-called *faenas*. Once every few weeks the paths, the football pitch, the school and other community terrains and buildings have to be cleaned and maintained. Other male tasks that will be discussed in the pages that follow include clearing land, planting and harvesting maize, cultivating cash crops and building houses.

Clearing the land

Land clearance is a heavy task. After selecting the piece of land to be cultivated, the Q'eqchi'es cut down the trees and bushes with their machetes and axes; this may take weeks depending on the kind of vegetation. After that they spread out the material cut down and let it dry for a while. They take away useful materials, make fire breaks and burn the rest after about a month. They do this at the beginning of the main maize cycle in March or April. If there are to be two maize crops the land to be used in the second cycle is cleared at the same time. Table 7.4 below outlines the various labour forms that are practised during land clearance and the number of households engaged in each of these forms in the four villages I studied in detail. Table 7.4 shows that there is considerable diversity in the forms of labour that the various respondents within the same community practise in clearing their lands. Some work in a group while others prefer to do the clearing alone or with the help of some day-labourers whom they pay.

Table 7.4: labour forms engaged in during land clearance in four villages (in numbers and percentages of respondents)

Labour forms	Xalihá	Chaabil-choch	Samox	Rubelpec
Group-wise	22 (55.00 %)	12 (30.77 %)	2 (5.40 %)	4 (5.88 %)
Individual	17 (42.50 %)	19 (48.72 %)	32 (86.49 %)	44 (64.71 %)
Individual and hired wage labourers	1 (2.50 %)	8 (20.51 %)	3 (8.11 %)	20 (29.41 %)
Total respondents	40 (100 %)	39 (100 %)	37 (100 %)	68 (100 %)

Moreover, there is considerable difference between the various communities in this respect. In Xalihá group-wise labour is relatively strong while in Rubelpec there is significant use of wage labour. Chaabilchoch and Samox occupy an intermediate position between these two villages. The statements made by respondents with a regional overview such as priests also reflect the diversity of labour patterns used in land clearance. Nor has the issue been settled finally. For example, in Samox there is discussion among the villagers about whether clearance work should be done individually or group-wise. Rented land is always cleared on an individual basis, whether this land is rented by fellow villagers or by outsiders.

Planting maize

By contrast, Table 7.5 shows that maize planting is almost always done group-wise. Respondents with a regional overview confirm this group-wise character of maize planting. Only villagers who are in conflict with the rest of the community have to plant individually or hire wage labourers to help them. For example, the two men in Xalihá who plant individually are the president of the committee and his father; they both play controversial roles in the community. They invite their neighbours to help them plant their maize, but the neighbours simply do not show up. Even maize planting on rented lands is done group-wise in Samox and Rubelpec, but not in Chaabilchoch.

Table 7.5: labour forms practised in planting maize in four villages (in numbers and percentages of respondents)

Labour forms	Xaliha	Chaabil-choch	Samox	Rubelpec
Group-wise	38 (95.00 %)	37 (94.88 %)	37 (94.88 %)	65 (95.59 %)
Individual	2 (5.00 %)	2 (5.12 %)	1 (2.56 %)	-
Individual and hired wage labourers	-	-	1 (2.56 %)	3 (4.41 %)
Total respondents	40 (100 %)	39 (100 %)	39 (100 %)	68 (100 %)

Harvesting maize

Table 7.6 shows that there is a diversity of labour forms used in harvesting maize similar to that which was observed in land clearance, albeit with more emphasis on group-wise labour and a large number of respondents hiring wage labourers.

Table 7.6: labour forms practised in harvesting maize in four villages (in numbers and percentages of respondents)

Labour forms	Xaliha	Chaabil-choch	Samox	Rubelpec
Group-wise	36 (92.31 %)	16 (43.24 %)	2 (5.72 %)	10 (14.92 %)
Individual	3 (7.69 %)	11 (29.73 %)	28 (80.00 %)	35 (52.24 %)
Individual and hired wage labourers	-	10 (27.03 %)	5 (14.28 %)	22 (32.84 %)
Total respondents	39 (100 %)	37 (100 %)	35 (100 %)	67 (100 %)

This diversity is apparent both in the pattern for households and as regards differences between the four villages. The statements of respondents with a regional overview confirm this diversity.The statements by respondents from

most of the villages concerning the labour forms which should be used in maize harvesting shows no definitive pattern. In Chaabilchoch ten of the sixteen respondents who told me they harvest group-wise said they do so only when they have a big harvest on the land that has been allocated to them. On rented land they harvest individually. In Samox the villagers used to harvest group-wise, but because of disagreement among them they started to harvest individually. In Rubelpec relatively more villagers harvest group-wise than in Samox, but those who harvest individually are more convinced that this is what they ought to do. Consequently, as in the case of land clearance Xalihá and Rubelpec constitute the opposite extremes with Chaabilchoch and Samox in between.

The cultivation of cash crops

Other food crops that are cultivated in relatively small quantities, such as beans and chilli, are taken care of by the woman of the household on an individual basis. The same holds true of coffee when it is produced by the household only as a food crop. Where coffee is produced in relatively large quantities as a cash crop the man does the job individually and, when needed, he hires wage labourers. The same pattern, *i.e.* individual labour and when needed hiring mozos, is used in the cultivation of all cash crops including cardamom.

The only exception is rice. The villagers of Xalihá began cultivating this crop a few years ago and at present production has reached 769.84 quintales. In Xalihá rice is mainly a cash crop: 72.90 per cent of the harvest is sold.[6] However, all those who produce rice in considerable quantities (more than three quintales a year) plant and harvest it group-wise. DIGESA officials confirmed that in the Río Dulce area rice cultivation is also done in a group-wise manner. In Xalihá the use of group-wise labour to plant rice is related to the fact that rice and maize are planted at the same time, so the inclusion of rice with maize planting makes sense for practical reasons.

The amount of wage labour involved in cash-crop production varies considerably from village to village. In Xalihá no wage labourers at all are hired because the main activities in the cultivation of two of the three main income-earning crops, *i.e.* rice and maize, are performed group-wise. The cultivation of the other crop, chillis, requires only the labour the household is able to provide. By contrast, in Samox 19 households - 45.24 per cent of all households - hire wage labourers for their coffee and cardamom harvest and pay 8159.50 quetzales as wages. Ten villagers work as wage labourers for other villagers.

In Chaabilchoch 34 households - 43.59 per cent of all households - employ wage labourers in their cardamom harvest and pay 16,165 quetzales

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[6]. Estimates based on interviews with 40 of the 46 households in Xalihá.

in wages. Ten villagers work for other villagers and some fifty Q'eqchi'es from other areas also come in to work in Chaabilchoch. In general households with a relatively high yearly income in both villages hire these labourers while those with relatively low incomes perform wage labour. A few years ago many more wage labourers were hired in Samox and Chaabilchoch. In Rubelpec hardly any wage labourers are employed in cash crop production because there is not much production of this kind. However, quite a number of villagers employ wage labourers in clearing land, harvesting maize and building houses.

The hiring of wage labourers suggests a high level of commoditization of labour in cash crop production; however, personal relations continue to play a role in wage labour. For example, in Samox there is a considerable difference between the average wages that the villagers pay to fellow villagers - 7.87 quetzales a day - and those they pay to Q'eqchi'es who come from outside of the village - 4.79 quetzales a day.

House building

House building is another heavy job that the villagers have to do once in a while; the frequency of which depends on the kind of building materials they use. The labour forms they practise are as diverse as in the case of land clearance and harvesting maize. In Table 7.7 these forms and the number and percentages of respondents who engage in them in the four communities I studied in detail are listed.

Table 7.7: labour forms used in house building in four villages (in numbers and percentages of respondents)

Labour forms	Xalihá	Chaabil-choch	Rubelpec	Samox
Group-wise	38 (95.00 %)	7 (26.92 %)	10 (14.71 %)	3 (15.00 %)
Individual	2 (5.00 %)	18 (69.23 %)	37 (54.41 %)	8 (40.00 %)
Individual and hired wage labourers	-	1 (3.85 %)	21 (30.88 %)	9 (45.00 %)
Total respondents	40 (100 %)	26 (100 %)	68 (100 %)	20 (100 %)

Some households work group-wise, others work alone while still others pay wage labourers to help them. Moreover, there is also considerable diversity between the villages: Xalihá on the one hand and Rubelpec and Samox on

the other. Samox has the highest percentage of households that hire wage labourers to help them in construction work.

7.2.3 *Subsistence production*

The Q'eqchi'es' economic practices have two basic aims. On the one hand there are the activities of the household or local community that focus on the cultivation of crops, the raising of animals and the fabrication of articles that are consumed or used by the household or community itself. These activities enter into the category of subsistence production. On the other hand the household or local community engages in activities intended to earn money or exchange goods with other households or communities. These activities include the cultivation of cash crops, the sale of animals, trade activities and commercial artisan production. Products involved in market-oriented production or activities are commodities: they are sold or exchanged for other products.

In the villages I studied in detail almost all the households engage in the same standard repertoire of subsistence production. Even many urban households hold on to this standard repertoire using their gardens or a piece of land on the outskirts of the town. The households produce maize, black beans, chillis, coffee, cocoa, fruits such as bananas and *yuca* and specific vegetables such as *huisquil*. They always have birds such as turkeys, ducks and chickens and sometimes one or more pigs walking around the house; sooner or later they all find their way into the mouths of household members. Most of the cooking utensils and furniture are made within the household.

Maize is by far the most important subsistence crop. It is used to prepare the main ingredients of the diet, such as tortillas, tamales and atol. Moreover, it is used as fodder for chicken, ducks, turkeys and pigs, and part of the maize production is reserved as seed for the next maize cycle. However, not all the maize that the household consumes is produced by the household without external inputs and not all the maize that the household produces is actually consumed by that household. Maize is also bought and sold which means that maize production and consumption do not stay exclusively within the limits of the subsistence sphere, but as will be explained below most of its production and consumption maintains a predominantly subsistence character. The average production, sale and purchase of maize per household as well as the average maize consumption per capita in four villages are listed in Table 7.8. This category of maize consumption refers to the maize that is used for human consumption, fodder and seed.

Table 7.8: average production, sale and purchase of maize per household and average maize consumption per capita in four Q'eqchi' villages (in quintales)[7]

Maize	Xalihá	Rubelpec	Chaabil-choch	Samox
Production per household	52.51	27.68	28.01	14.60
Sale per household	6.85	3.81	2.42	-
Purchases per household	0.17	6.97	3.91	13.87
Consumption per capita	8.17	5.13	4.62	4.39

Of course, the production of maize per household depends on the quantity and quality of the land the household has access to and on the climatic conditions. In the higher parts of the Q'eqchi' heartland, including Rubelpec, the climate permits only one harvest of maize each year while the lower and warmer areas, including Xalihá and Chaabilchoch, allow the Q'eqchi'es to have two crops of maize.

The villagers of Xalihá have a relatively large expanse of fertile land at their disposal and bring in two crops a year. They also have a relatively high maize production per household. They are able to sell part of their maize production and dedicate a considerable part of their maize to feeding a few hundred pigs, most of which are sold. This fodder partly explains the relatively high level of maize consumption per capita compared to the other three villages in which the number of pigs per household is much more limited.

Another part of the explanation is that the villagers do not like to sell maize. Several respondents told me that according to the elderly villagers and ancestors they should not sell maize 'because it will cry if we do so'. One of these respondents is a widow whose household of six members produces 200 quintales of maize; however, they sell only ten quintales although they have only a few pigs and birds to feed. In addition, the Xalihá villagers are not encouraged to optimize the selling of maize for practical reasons. The possibility that the Xalihá villagers could produce more maize than they actually do cannot be ruled out. Several respondents with a regional overview told me that in the remote areas of the Franja Transversal del Norte, Izabal and El Petén the Q'eqchi'es are discouraged from

[7]. These data were collected in interviews with 40, 39, 39, and 57 households in Xalihá, Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec respectively.

increasing their maize production because of the low prices merchants in these areas offer them. However, the villagers do have to earn money and the possibilities for doing so in Xalihá are limited. In any case, for practical reasons they have to sell a minimum part of their maize.

The other three villages have more or less the same maize consumption per capita, but to do so they have to resort to buying maize. The villagers of Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch both sell and buy maize; this is due to the fact that some are able to sell while others have to buy and to the lack of storage facilities. After the harvest they have to sell part of their maize because they cannot keep large quantities of it until the next harvest. Consequently, some months before this next harvest they have insufficient stores and have to buy at a much higher price. Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec are all net maize "importers".

In order to maintain this level of human maize consumption the villagers of Chaabilchoch, Samox and Rubelpec have to resort to buying land elsewhere or to renting land on which maize can be cultivated. The villagers of Samox are able to produce around half the maize they need for consumption only by renting or owning land elsewhere because the land in their own village is not suited to maize cultivation. In Rubelpec even access to rented land or land owned elsewhere does not enable the villagers to produce most of the maize they need. On their limited amount of land just one maize harvest is possible. They compensate for this limited access to land by using considerable quantities of chemical inputs which will be discussed below.

In short, maize is the Q'eqchi'es' main food crop and they try to produce a considerable proportion of the quantities they consume themselves, even if this means they have to rent or buy land in far away places or resort to large quantities of external inputs. They are willing to use money they have earned from market-oriented activities to achieve this objective. Several respondents who were not able to produce enough maize and consequently had to buy the majority of the maize they needed told me they felt very sad about that. Only one of my respondents told me that he does not cultivate any maize at all.

7.2.4 *Market-oriented production and activities*

Subsistence activities take place within the household and the community; market-oriented practices relate the household and local community to outsiders. In Xalihá these external relations of the households and the community as a whole coincide. In this community exchange of and trade in goods takes place almost exclusively with actors outside of the community. The only circulation of goods within the community consists of contributions to religious feasts and mutual help in case of need. These goods cannot be considered as commodities.

By contrast, in both Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec maize is sold among the villagers, there are some who sell grocery articles and medicines to their fellow villagers and there is a villager who works as a carpenter and sells furniture within the village. In these communities there are several villagers who trade in locally produced cash crops while others complement their income by working for other villagers. In Samox there are also villagers who work for other villagers and there is an individual who sells grocery articles and trades in cash crops.

In short, in Samox and even more in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec economic relations between the households have become commercialized to some extent and commodities are exchanged among the villagers. Nevertheless, even in these communities market-oriented activities are mainly directed towards actors outside the community and the market remains predominantly "situated" outside the community. The limited exchange of commodities between households points to a low level of division of labour between the households in this community. Almost all households within the same community try to secure their material existence in similar ways.

The most obvious form of market-oriented production consists of selling the surplus of food crops and animals that are raised primarily for consumption. The surplus of maize and pigs in Xalihá has already been mentioned, and the same holds true for the surplus of chickens, turkeys, beans, chillis, cocoa, fruit and other subsistence products. The flexible use of these products - if they cannot be sold at an acceptable price they can always be consumed - is one of their attractive aspects. The same holds true for rice production. It is used mainly as a cash crop, but can also be consumed within the household. Nevertheless, the selling of food crops may be problematic as was explained above about maize in Xalihá; the villagers have also developed a number of market-oriented activities that show no continuity with subsistence production, such as cardamom.

In order to assess the market-oriented performance two standards will be used: "gross product" and "net income". The former refers to the products and services the households have sold minus the costs of production, expressed in quetzales.[8] The net income subtracts from the gross product the investments that had or would have to be made to be able to achieve the same production in the following year or years.[9] Moreover, in the net

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[8]. For example, from the amount of money the households earned by selling cardamom the costs they incurred by hiring wage labourers in the cardamom harvest, transport costs and the costs of chemical inputs has been subtracted in order to reach the gross product of cardamom. Payments to INTA by each household have also been included in the total gross product calculations.

[9]. For example, the amount of money made by selling a cow has been included in the gross product, but in the net income the price of a calf has been subtracted from this gross product in order to reach the net income of cow raising. I do not know whether all respondents who sold a cow actually bought such a calf, but to get a good indicator of

income the money spent on buying maize has been subtracted from the gross product because that allows me to relate net income to its consequences for subsistence production; this gives a more adequate indicator of economic performance in the market-oriented sphere.[10] The average gross product and net income per household, in total and per product or activity, in Xalihá are listed in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9: gross product and net income per household and per activity or product in Xalihá (in quetzales and percentages)[11]

Item	Gross product	Percentage	Net income	Percentage
Total	1571.21	100	1451.21	100
Pigs	453.24	28.85	453.24	31.23
Rice	451.87	28.76	451.87	31.14
Chillis	214.52	13.65	214.52	14.78
Maize	184.14	11.72	180.88	12.46
Cows/bulls	165.00	10.50	51.25	3.53
Wage labour	31.12	1.98	31.12	2.14
Others	71.32	4.54	68.33	4.72

Raising pigs and cultivating rice are the two main income generating activities in Xalihá. As in most remote settlement areas the popularity of raising pigs is related to the fact that pigs can walk all the way to the nearest road where the Q'eqchi'es wait for a camionero to pass. Cash crops present a serious transportation problem in this respect.

Rice has the advantage that it allows the swampy lands of the village to be used for agricultural purposes. The fact that it has been taken up as a

economic performance I assume they did.

[10]. Take for example two households which are able to earn the same amount of money by way of market-oriented activities. One is able to do so together with producing sufficient maize for its own consumption while the other has to buy considerable amounts of maize to reach the same maize consumption level. Take two other households which are able to achieve the same gross product. One does so without having to sell or buy maize while the other, because of lack of storage facilities, has to sell and later on has to buy maize. The selling of maize has been calculated in the gross product of the latter, but not the purchase of maize. In both cases it makes sense to evaluate the performance of the former household in more positive terms than the latter. These differences become visible in the way I calculate net income.

[11]. Based on interviews with respondents from 40 households.

crop only in recent years means that until recently the gross product and net income levels of the villagers were probably considerably lower than at present. The fact that the villagers abhor wage labour is expressed in its low contribution to both gross product and net income. Only the younger sons of the larger and relatively poorer households leave the village for some weeks a year to earn money in this way. While wage labour is marginal, handicrafts are almost non-existent as income earners. Only the woman of one household makes bags of wool to be sold at the San Agustín Chahal market.

Comparing Table 7.9 with Table 7.10 which refers to Chaabilchoch, it is clear that both the average gross product and net income per household in Chaabilchoch are more than twice as high as in Xaliha.

Table 7.10: gross product and net income per household and per activity or product in Chaabilchoch (in quetzales and percentages)[12]

Item	Gross product	Percentage	Net income	Percentage
Total	3361.00	100	2941.40	100
Cardamom	2185.99	65.04	2185.99	74.32
Cows/bulls	402.67	11.98	181.85	6.18
Wage labour	342.23	10.18	342.23	11.63
Chillis	113.53	3.38	113.53	3.86
Pigs	103.85	3.09	85.64	2.91
Others	212.73	6.33	32.16	1.10

In Chaabilchoch by far the most important income earner is cardamom. When the estimated 1740 quintales[13] the villagers produce are sold the amount of money they receive is even much higher than the figures of this table. Transportation costs, the amount of money spent on hiring wage labour and other costs have been subtracted from this amount to reach these gross product and net income figures.

A few years ago both the gross product and net income from cardamom were much higher, but prices have dropped in recent years and due to the drought last year the volume of production has diminished considerably. The drought affected each household's cardamom production

[12]. Based on interviews with respondents from 39 households.
[13]. 39 Households produce 870 quintales, so the production of the total of 78 households can be estimated as 2 x 870 = 1740 quintales.

differently, depending on the kind of land and the point in the cardamom cycle where the drought struck. As a result, there are considerable differences in cardamom production between the households.

Cardamom production requires wage labour. As has already been pointed out most of the demand for wage labour is met by Q'eqchi'es who come in from the central highlands to work for the Chaabilchoch villagers. Wage labour is also an important source of income for the relatively poor villagers of Chaabilchoch as can be seen from Table 7.10. The work they do for other villagers, however, accounts for less than twenty per cent of their total earnings from wage labour. Most of these total earnings comes from working for state agencies such as Caminos Rurales and Moscamed. The road construction project close to the town of Chajmaïc produces most of this income, which suggests that when this project ends the amount of money earned by doing wage labour may decrease again. In any case, the willingness to perform wage labour is much greater in Chaabilchoch than in Xalihá.

The high level of cash crop production involves considerable wage labour; it also allows the villagers to develop a number of other activities. For example, several villagers make money by buying and selling cardamom and there are three villagers who transport persons and cardamom from the village to the town of Chajmaïc using boats with outboard motors. The latter charge five quetzales for each person or quintal of cardamom. However, after reviewing calculations with them we discovered that the profit they make in this way is very limited. The fact that they enjoy navigating with their boats is more important to them than the money they make in the long run. Two villagers had to sell their boats because they were not profitable.

A similar picture emerges regarding commercial activities. Several villagers trade in grocery articles and there are even plans to start a local market. However, many villagers have failed to make this trade profitable and the efforts to create a local market have also ended in disappointment. The decreasing net income from cardamom has caused the local market in consumer goods to shrink.

One consequence of cultivating cardamom and developing related activities is that the villagers of Chaabilchoch have to buy maize and rent land on which to cultivate maize. These costs make up a considerable part of the difference between gross product and net income for the average household in the village. The difference between gross product and net income is even more pronounced in Samox, as Table 7.11 shows. The villagers of Samox have to spend even more money on buying maize and renting land in the Polochic valley on which to cultivate maize. The gross product per household in Samox is higher while the net income per household is lower than in Chaabilchoch. Nevertheless, the general patterns of gross product and net income per household are similar in Samox and Chaabilchoch. Cardamom production is by far the most important income raiser; in Samox this is mainly complemented by coffee cultivation.

Table 7.11: gross product and net income per household and per activity or product in Samox (in quetzales and percentages)[14]

Item	Gross product	Percentage	Net income	Percentage
Total	3473.31	100	2774.88	100
Cardamom	2547.67	73.35	2547.67	91.81
Coffee	515.57	14.84	515.57	18.58
Pigs	195.30	5.62	169.91	6.12
Wage labour	131.71	3.79	131.71	4.75
Others	83.06	2.40	-589.98	-21.26

The lower prices for cardamom and coffee have affected these income figures in Samox in the same way as in Chaabilchoch and due to a cardamom and coffee disease the production in volume of these crops has decreased significantly in recent years. Sixteen respondents told me how much cardamom they produced just a few years ago. This enabled me to estimate the average gross product and net income from cardamom per household at that time as 4762.31 quetzales at current prices, *i.e.* 86.93 per cent higher than in 1991-1992. Of course, these figures become lower if we take into account that greater cardamom production would entail higher costs such as wage labour, but in any case gross product and net income have decreased significantly in the last few years. As in Chaabilchoch this decrease differs from household to household and has involved a reduction in commercial activities such as selling grocery products.

The gross product and net income from wage labour are much more limited in Samox than in Chaabilchoch, but this difference is mainly due to the fact that the villagers in Samox perform very little wage labour for state agencies. Actually, the income the Samox villagers earn by doing wage labour for other villagers is higher than in Chaabilchoch. In Chaabilchoch most of the demand for wage labour is filled by wage labourers from outside the village, while in Samox most of this demand is satisfied by Samox villagers.

In contrast to the other three communities the villagers of Rubelpec do not earn most of their money by selling agricultural products, but from wage labour and developing commercial activities (see Table 7.12).

[14]. Based on interviews with respondents from 39 households.

Table 7.12: gross product and net income per household and per activity or product in Rubelpec (in quetzales and percentages)[15]

Item	Gross product	Percentage	Net income	Percentage
Total	2100.37	100	1684.20	100
Wage labour	1048.36	49.91	1048.36	62.25
Trade	401.83	19.13	401.83	23.86
Huipiles	252.89	12.04	252.89	15.02
Cows/bulls	166.00	7.90	66.00	3.92
Beans	81.22	3.87	81.22	4.82
Others	150.07	7.15	-166.10	-9.87

This difference is due to two principal factors that influence the economic strategies of the villagers of Rubelpec. First, the villagers do not have access to sufficient land to cultivate both cash crops and their main food crops. The kind of land they have access to is suited to the production of both subsistence crops - maize - and cash crops - coffee - but the villagers clearly give priority to producing maize for their own consumption. This means that there are few pieces of land left for cash-crop production. Secondly, the villagers have access to a functioning market in the nearby town of San Pedro Carchá which encourages them to develop commercial activities.

Wage labour is the most important of these activities. An estimated 77 households have one or more members who engage in wage labour at some time every year; only eight of them find work within the village. Most of the gross product and net income earned from doing wage labour are actually earned in the town of San Pedro Carchá (55.81 per cent) by working for the municipality and other state agencies, selecting cardamom (exclusively women's work) and by working as truck drivers. An additional 14.22 per cent of wages come from working in the cardamom harvests in places like Chaabilchoch in the Franja Transversal del Norte. Only 9.85 per cent is earned on nearby fincas which confirms the conclusion in Chapter Six that in general the Q'eqchi'es try to avoid working on fincas despite the fact that during the coffee harvest higher wages are paid on fincas than in other places.

The second way the villagers can earn income is by setting up a small shop in the village or, much more importantly, leaving the village to work as travelling merchants in the Polochic or Franja Transversal del Norte areas. Some have even set up shops in Raxruhá or Chahal. They trade in grocery

[15]. Based on interviews with respondents from 51 households

items, clothes, shoes, kitchen utensils, machetes and similar products and buy these articles in Carchá or Cobán. 42 Households have one or more members who work in this way and familiarity with such trade is surely one of the reasons for the success of the consumer cooperative in the village.

Another important means of making money is exclusively women's work: they weave huipiles of white fibre, add embroidery to the blouses and sell them in the market in Carchá. The knowledge needed to do this has been transmitted from mother to daughter and there is no interference by any external actor or agency in this textile production. Textile production is very limited among the Q'eqchi'es, unlike other ethnic groups in Guatemala, but Rubelpec is the exception. It adds significantly to gross product and net income in Rubelpec.

Of course, some agriculture is used to make money in Rubelpec. Several agricultural products are sold in relatively small quantities and 32.65 per cent of the wages earned come from by doing agricultural labour within the community or elsewhere.

The information about subsistence and market-oriented production and activities in the four villages in the preceding pages is confirmed by the statements of respondents with a regional overview. In the central highlands the villages around the towns of Santo Domingo Cobán, San Pedro Carchá and San Juan Chamelco try to maintain their subsistence agriculture by using external inputs such as chemical fertilizers or renting land in the Franja Transversal areas because of the severe scarcity of fertile land in their villages. They complement this subsistence agriculture with several market-oriented activities and products such as wage labour in the Franja Transversal del Norte and nearby towns and work as travelling merchants. In addition, they produce limited quantities of coffee and beans to be sold on the market.

On the other hand, in the settlement areas in the lowlands fertile land is not the scarcest element, but opportunities for becoming involved in profitable market-oriented production or activities are very limited. In these areas the households are able to produce sufficient maize and other food crops for their own consumption without external inputs. However, market-oriented activities are limited to selling any surplus of maize and beans, and the production of rice, cows and pigs.

In the intermediate areas, called *tierra templada*, the households in the various villages are able to maintain their subsistence economy and complement this production by cultivating cash crops such as cardamom and coffee and by raising some cattle. They make use of wage labourers coming from the central highlands. Of course, an essential condition for the success of these strategies is stable access to their lands, which is the crucial problem.

7.2.5 *External inputs*

The extent to which the Q'eqchi'es use inputs in their production from outside the local community shows considerable variation among the households in the various villages. They all use some external inputs, however, and among the variations some basic characteristics can be discerned.

One of these characteristics is the fact that the willingness to accept external inputs is directly related to how the villagers perceive aj Kastii who offer them the inputs. In Chapter Two it was pointed out that when the Q'eqchi'es are confronted with any aj Kastii they first consider who is speaking and in which category this person can be classified before taking the usefulness of the technology he is offering or the proposal he is making into consideration. A relation of personal trust has to be established and in the interim the Q'eqchi'es just do what they are told to do and avoid conflicts. Provided a relation of trust can be established they are willing to see whether the proposal or technology may be useful to them. The decisive moment comes after the representative of the agency stops coming: will they continue to apply his or her advices or stop doing so?

There is considerable variation in the meanings the Q'eqchi'es attribute to the aj Kastii.[16] In Xalihá my respondents made no differentiation among aj Kastii and most of them (28) expressed fear towards aj Kastii in rather strong words such as: 'The aj Kastii only want to command us and do not respect us'. Only nine respondents said that they did not fear the aj Kastii. In Samox the numbers of respondents who expressed fear and those who did not fear the aj Kastii are equal (16), but almost all of them told me that state employees and merchants do frighten them. In Chaabilchoch a majority of respondents (25) rejected the idea of fearing the aj Kastii; only 13 told me they feared them. In Rubelpec 17 respondents admitted in various ways that they feared the aj Kastii while a majority of 51 respondents denied feeling any fear in this respect. Most of the latter (34) told that the situation had improved and that they need not fear them any more.

In short, there is a scale from relatively high to little fear from Xalihá to Samox to Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec which coincides with the level of acceptance of external inputs. In Xalihá the villagers buy only calves and machetes from outsiders and in the previous chapter the failure of the DIGESA project in Xalihá was discussed. Only one respondent told me that he had bought one quintal of chemical fertilizers; the only input they accept is the vaccination of their animals by a DIGESEPE employee.

In Samox the villagers accept the same limited number of inputs as in Xalihá, complemented by piglets, wage labour and rented land they obtain

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[16]. I have posed several questions concerning their views on aj kastii to all the respondents in the households in the four villages I studied in detail.

from other Q'eqchi'es. The only production input they obtain in significant quantities from aj Kastii is *gramoxone*, a chemical product for disinfecting the land after clearing it. In contrast to the Q'eqchi'es of Xalihá the villagers of Samox use an average 0.94 litres of this input per household and spend an average 32.12 quetzales per household on this product. The villagers of Samox had various negative experiences with government agencies. The BANDESA debt the villagers are still faced with because their cardamom dryer turned out to be unprofitable has been mentioned already. In addition, UNICEF officials broke their promise to deliver tubes for building a drinking water system.

The clearest example of the villagers' distrust towards government agencies is provided by the cardamom and coffee disease. In 1985 this disease appeared for the first time and according to the villagers the appearance was related to two facts: it started after Moscamed dropped boxes with large insects from a little airplane and after ANACAFé came to teach them how to improve their coffee production. In the eyes of the villagers the appearance of these agencies has something to do with the start of the disease in their crops. The villagers do not resort to government agencies to find a solution to their problems either. DIGESA employees once told them which pesticides to use, but these pesticides turned out to be very expensive and the wage labourers could not stand their smell. Talking to the villagers it became clear to me that they considered government agencies to be part of the problem, not part of the solution. They would rather leave the situation as it is than ask any government agency to help them.

The fact that the same agency - Moscamed - the one the villagers of Samox hold partly responsible for the disease in their crops, is able to recruit several villagers in Chaabilchoch to work for it and to convince the villagers of that community to accept its services indicates the difference in acceptance of projects and external inputs between Samox and Chaabilchoch. The Caminos Rurales project in Chaabilchoch has already been mentioned. The three veterinarian promoters trained by DIGESEPE and Veterinarios sin Fronteras are quite popular in the village and there is a DIGEBOS group. Moreover, the villagers buy calves from a nearby aj Kastii hacienda administrator and use a considerable quantity of gramoxone (1.43 litres per household) on which they spend 42.69 quetzales per household. The purchase of piglets, the hiring of wage labour and renting of land takes place among Q'eqchi'es.

Even more external inputs are accepted in Rubelpec. The villagers use an average 0.34 litres of gramoxone which costs them 11.90 quetzales per household. They spend an average 117 quetzales per household on chemical fertilizers: 2.25 quintales per household. In addition, there is considerable intervention by government agencies and NGOs in Rubelpec. There is a DIGEBOS group; INTECAP has trained the women who run the bakery and INACOP does the bookkeeping for the cooperative. There is a group of five ladies who have made a contract with DIGESEPE for ten months. They buy

a little chicken at a price of 2.75 quetzales, sell the adult bird for 25 quetzales and buy special fodder from DIGESEPE. The same agency encourages a group of eight men to raise cows. They have received a loan of 24,000 quetzales for a period of 18 months at 30 per cent a year interest. They buy calves at a price of 450 quetzales, rent a meadow for 2,200 quetzales a year and sell an adult cow after 18 months for 1,500 quetzales. Four years ago they started this project and they now have twenty cows.

DIGESA began to work in Rubelpec in 1987 with a group of 50 men and a women's group of 30 members. According to the representante agrícola these efforts met with much distrust initially. He told me he managed to overcome this distrust, but after a few years the DIGESA officials stopped coming and the groups disintegrated. Part of their work, the promotion of vegetables production, was also supported at the same time by another government agency called *Desarrollo de la Comunidad*. In 1991 Vitamina "A" took over the vegetable cultivation promotion and according to the project coordinator between 40 and 60 households participate and have a vegetable garden.

In brief, three projects have focused on vegetables promotion and one of them is still active in the village. Indeed, vegetable cultivation has developed to a considerable extent. Of my respondents 45 per cent told me they cultivate at least some vegetables for their own consumption, in addition to standard vegetables such as huisquil. Of course, it is hard to say whether they do so as a result of these projects, but the percentage is high compared to other communities where hardly any of these vegetables are cultivated. However, the decisive moment comes when the Vitamina "A" officials stop coming to the village. Will the villagers go on cultivating vegetables after that? The fact that the DIGESA project ended when DIGESA employees stopped coming does not give much hope in this respect. The sustainability and success of vegetable production still have to prove themselves.

The relatively open attitude of the villagers of Rubelpec towards external inputs and project proposals is not only related to their relatively low distrust towards aj Kastii; their proximity to the markets in the towns of Carchá and Cobán enables them to evade the frustrating impact of merchants in other parts of the Q'eqchi' region. They are in a position to integrate into the market on better terms. However, even the villagers of Rubelpec reject specific inputs such as hybrid seeds and pesticides and the repeated proposals by DIGESA that they change their maize planting practices in order to improve the production per square metre.

In general, hybrid maize seeds, pesticides and these maize planting methods are rejected in all the villages I studied while the vaccination of animals and the curative services of the representante agrícola or veterinarian promoters of DIGESEPE are accepted in all. The acceptance of gramoxone, chemical fertilizers and the use of external technology for cultivating vegetables is variable.

7.2.6 Consumption and savings

Calves are among the inputs the Q'eqchi'es purchase outside their community. The raising of cows and bulls contributes 165.00 and 166.00 quetzales to the gross product per household in Xalihá and Rubelpec, but after subtracting the prices of calves a much more limited contribution to net income remains (see Table 7.9 and Table 7.12). The fact that there is hardly any price difference between calves and adult animals in Samox means that the villagers hardly raise any cows or bulls. In Chaabilchoch cattle raising is more profitable due to the fact that the villagers maintain good contacts with the manager of a nearby hacienda who pays them a favourable price for their animals.

However, cows and bulls are not only raised for the purpose of making money in the short run, they are also used as a means of investing savings. Cows and bulls present no storage problem; they last for several years; they can be fed using natural materials that are available in the common waste lands for example; and when the household needs cash they can be sold. Several households who sold an animal in 1991-1992 did so because one of their members was ill so they needed to buy medicines. It comes as no surprise that most of the cows and bulls are raised by the relatively richer households in the various communities.

The average household is not able to save much. The amounts of money per capita the Q'eqchi'es in these four communities are able to make are very low, as Table 7.13 shows. In this table the gross product per capita in the four villages has been listed.

Table 7.13: gross product per capita in four villages (in quetzales and US dollars)[17]

Gross product per capita	Xalihá	Rubelpec	Chaabilchoch	Samox
Quetzales	280.13	349.23	526.42	535.41
US dollars	56	69	105	107

A comparison with the national gross domestic product per capita, which was 904 US dollar in 1991[18], shows that despite their differences the villagers in these communities are very poor, even by Guatemalan standards. Of course, the picture becomes less black if we take into account

[17]. Figures in US dollars are rough calculations based on an exchange rate of five quetzales to one dollar.

[18]. Inter-American Development Bank 1993: 109.

the fact that these figures do not include subsistence production within the four communities. On the other hand, the net income per capita in these communities - which is a better indicator of the amount of money they are able to spend - is even lower than the gross product per capita: 51, 56, 92, and 85 US dollar in Xalihá, Rubelpec, Chaabilchoch and Samox respectively.

This picture of severe poverty is confirmed by the available statistics from other sources for the *región norte*, which includes the population of the departments of Baja and Alta Verapaz. In this region 76 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty and another 14 per cent live in poverty.[19] The first category refers to those who do not have sufficient income to buy basic food nor have access to a minimal level of goods and services. The latter category is able to buy food, but not the minimal level of goods and services. Again, this income refers to income in money; it does not take into account the fact that many Q'eqchi'es are able to produce their basic food themselves without recourse to the market. So the actual poverty is severe, but not as severe as these data would indicate.

7.2.7 *Economic stratification*

The Q'eqchi'es are not only very poor, there are considerable differences between the villages and between the various households within each village. A distinction has been made between subsistence production and market-oriented production and the same distinction will be used as a starting point for measuring the degree of economic stratification. Economic stratification within Q'eqchi' communities refers first of all to the differences between the various households in terms of food crops and other items that are produced and consumed within the household. Secondly, it points to the differences between the households in terms of how much money they dispose of as a result of market-oriented activities once costs and investment have been subtracted.

It is impossible to take into consideration all the food crops and other items that are produced and consumed within the household, but I do have the details for maize production and consumption. From the point of view of economic stratification maize consumption is more important than maize production because stratification refers to differences between households in terms of what they can actually do with the results of their economic activities. Of course, maize consumption is not just an indicator of the results of subsistence production because part of the maize some households consume is bought and the maize some households consume has been produced using inputs they have bought. Nevertheless, most of the maize

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[19]. Information from Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Encuesta Nacional Socio-demográfica 1986-1987, región norte*, as cited by AVANCSO n.d. (a). There is much to be said about the reliability of these data, but they do provide a rough indication of poverty in Alta and Baja Verapaz.

that is consumed by the households is produced by them and together with net income differences maize consumption differences give a quite accurate picture of economic differences between the various households in the communities.

Maize consumption

As was discussed above, maize consumption refers to the maize the households dedicate to human consumption, to feeding their birds and pigs and that they reserve as seed for the next maize cycle. The standard I use is the one provided by the agricultural extension workers in the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the bishopric of Verapaz. According to this standard one person consumes one *libra*[20] of maize each day; a pig needs 2.5 libras of maize as fodder while chickens, turkeys and ducks eat two-thirds of a libra of maize. Large animals such as horses and cows are not given any maize as fodder. The standard is relatively high for pigs and birds; in practice they need less fodder because they walk around and look for complementary food in the surroundings of the house. The quantity of maize the Q'eqchi'es need to reserve as seed depends on the amount of land they use for maize cultivation; thus, information on the latter allows me to calculate how much seed they need.

Next to the limited quantities of maize needed to reserve as seed, human consumption is the first priority and what is left over is used as fodder. Taking these considerations into account five categories of maize consumption can be defined. Into the first category come those households which do not have enough maize even for human consumption. A second category consists of those households who have just enough maize for human consumption. A third category is made up of those who have more than enough to feed themselves but not enough to feed their animals. Into a fourth category come households that have enough maize to feed themselves and their animals. The last category consists of those who have more than enough to feed both themselves and their animals. The numbers and percentages of households that enter into each category in four villages are listed in Table 7.14.

The data of this table point to the conclusion that stratification in terms of maize consumption goes from low to high from Xalihá to Chaabilchoch and to Samox. In Rubelpec stratification has also reached a high level, but these data may give a distorted impression of this village because the villagers have relatively few pigs and birds to feed. Thus, when a household has more than enough for human consumption it enters into category four or five much more easily than a household in the other villages.

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[20]. One libra equals 453 grams.

Table 7.14: spread of maize consumption per household in four communities (in number of respondents and percentages per category)[21]

Categories maize consumption	Xalihá	Chaabil-choch	Samox	Rubelpec
I	-	3 (9.37 %)	8 (22.86 %)	4 (7.55 %)
II	10 (38.46 %)	12 (37.50 %)	9 (25.71 %)	9 (16.98 %)
III	4 (15.38 %)	8 (25.00 %)	2 (5.72 %)	6 (11.32 %)
IV	11 (42.31 %)	5 (15.63 %)	9 (25.71 %)	4 (7.55 %)
V	1 (3.85 %)	4 (12.50 %)	7 (20.00 %)	30 (56.60 %)
Total respondents	26 (100 %)	32 (100 %)	35 (100 %)	53 (100 %)

Nevertheless, the fact that 92.45 per cent of the respondents in Rubelpec have sufficient maize to feed themselves while they buy relatively little maize (see Table 7.8) shows that in spite of the fact that they have very little land at their disposal (Table 7.2) they give importance to producing a large part of their maize themselves. On the other hand, the fact that 46.16 per cent of the households in Xalihá are able to feed themselves and their animals given the high number of birds and pigs they raise while they hardly buy any maize underlines their remarkable maize production.

Net income

After dealing with the need to provide enough maize for consumption the other need has to be addressed: earning enough money to cover expenses such as the purchase of clothes, machetes and medicines. The most suitable criterion to use in this respect is net income. The differences in average net income per household in the various communities were outlined above.[22]

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[21]. Category I: not enough even for human consumption. Category II: just enough for human consumption. Category III: enough for human consumption, but not enough to feed animals. Category IV: enough for human consumption and to feed animals. Category V: more than enough for human consumption and to feed animals.

[22]. Xalihá: Q. 1451.21. Rubelpec: Q. 1684.20. Samox: Q. 2774.88. Chaabilchoch: Q. 2941.40.

In Table 7.15 the spread of net income of the respondents within these four communities is listed.

Table 7.15: spread of net income of households in four communities (in number of households per category)

Net income categories in quetzales	Xalihá	Rubelpec	Chaabil-choch	Samox
XII. 6750 or more			2	2
XI. 6000 - 6750			2	2
X. 5250 - 6000			4	3
IX. 4500 - 5250		5		3
VIII. 3750 - 4500		1	3	1
VII. 3000 - 3750	3	4	3	3
VI. 2250 - 3000	6	7	2	6
V. 1500 - 2250	7	6	9	4
IV. 750 - 1500	10	8	7	4
III. 0 - 750	13	14	6	6
II. -750 - 0		4		4
I. -750 or lower		1		1
Total respondents	39	50	38	39

This table shows first that there are considerable differences in economic stratification in terms of net income between the various villages. The level of stratification varies from low to high from Xalihá to Rubelpec to Chaabilchoch and Samox. Secondly, it makes clear that there are very substantial net income differences between the various households within each community. In Samox there is a household with a negative net income of -762.23 quetzales while the "richest" household has a net income of 12951.60 quetzales; even in Xalihá the "poorest" household has a net income of only 240 quetzales while the "richest" has a net income of 3692.50 quetzales.

However, part of these differences in Xalihá, Chaabilchoch and Samox are due to incidental factors. In Xalihá rice production contributes considerably to the net income per household (31.14 per cent of average net income per household) but not for all households. Rice cultivation has been taken up very recently and some started to do so in the year I held my

interviews. As a result their rice production has not been included in my calculations and they ended up in the lower categories of net income earners. Probably after a few years, when they will all have started to produce rice, the level of net income differences in Xalihá will reduce significantly.

Incidental factors also play a role in net income differences in Chaabilchoch and Samox where the drought and the cardamom and coffee disease have affected the various households in very differential ways. In Chaabilchoch four respondents told me they had lost almost all of their cardamom while others achieved a cardamom fertility of 80 quintales per manzana. In Samox those who told me that their cardamom production had suffered very severely from disease are precisely those to be found in the lower categories of net income earnings while others continued to have a good harvest. Without the differential effects of these incidental factors net income differentiation would have been much more limited.

Factors influencing economic stratification

These incidental factors are not the only ones that influence economic stratification. First, there is access to sufficient fertile land to cultivate maize and cash crops. The relatively easy access to land with a high maize fertility explains the relatively low level of stratification in terms of maize consumption in Xalihá where almost everyone is able to produce a considerable amount of maize. Access to sufficient fertile land to cultivate maize does present a problem to several households in Samox and Rubelpec who enter into the lowest categories of maize consumption. In Rubelpec those with little access to fertile land for cultivating maize not only see their level of maize consumption affected, but also their net income levels because they have to buy considerable quantities of maize or fertilizers.

Moreover, differential access to land with high cardamom fertility is an important factor in Chaabilchoch and Samox in explaining net income differentiation. In Chaabilchoch those with land with low maize fertility at least have the possibility of renting land elsewhere, and the villagers of Samox who have good relations with Q'eqchi'es in the lower parts of the valley can do the same. In the case of land with low cardamom fertility the same escape valve does not exist, however. Cardamom has a cycle of between five and seven years and land is rented on a yearly basis. Thus, for purposes of cardamom production renting land is not an option.

The access to fertile land is determined by several issues such as the scarcity of land, the moment of settlement in the community, the splitting up of land afterwards between sons and membership of the Local Development Committee. In Xalihá these issues are not very important because of the relatively low level of land scarcity and the fact that lands have not been allocated in a definite way to each individual household. In Rubelpec access to land is very differential, but it is not related to the

moment of settlement or membership of the Local Development Committee because the latter has no influence on land issues and the households belong to kinship lines that have probably been there for a long time already. In Samox and Chaabilchoch there is no fertile land available any more. In these communities those who came in at the moment the community was founded and those who maintained a position within the Local Development Committee have the best lands. The amount of good lands their sons have access to is determined by the number of sons.

Another factor that particularly influences net income is the willingness, need or ability to go into market-oriented activities. On the one hand, bad market conditions and the fact that they do not like doing wage labour is clearly one of the factors that explains the relatively low level of stratification in terms of net income in Xalihá. On the other hand, the much higher level of net income differentiation in Rubelpec is related to the relative eagerness - and the need to do so - of the villagers of Rubelpec to go into retail trade and perform wage labour. Differences in the number of members of the household who are able to do so have a considerable effect on the net income differences per household.

In line with this argument illness plays an important role in economic performance, not only in terms of not being able to make money by doing wage labour. Illness also affects the capacity to cultivate maize. For example, in two of the three households in Chaabilchoch that have insufficient maize even for human consumption the man frequently suffers from malaria and so is unable to work.

7.3 Q'eqchi' economic strategies and religion

> 'We have to give thanks for our harvest, burn candles and copal pom and eat together, and not just cut down trees, take the crops from the land and earn money.'

This quote from a Samox villager points to the fact that Q'eqchi' economy is not just about economic logic or an instrumentalist use of production factors in order to optimize production and profits. Some economic practices make sense from an instrumentalist point of view, others do not. Economic practices are subject to meaning-making, which opens up the possibility for religion to influence these practices.

This section has two objectives. First, it will present the basic aspects of the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies based on the preceding discussion of their economic practices. Secondly, it will expose the ways these basic aspects are interrelated with their religion. I shall focus on "interrelations" between economy and religion emphasizing mutual reinforcements rather than unilateral influences from one vis-à-vis the other. It is almost

impossible to demonstrate monocausal relations between economy and religion.

7.3.1 *Subsistence and market-integration*

Based on the analysis of subsistence production and market-oriented activities and production in the preceding section two central conclusions come to the fore. First, agriculture, or at least subsistence agriculture, remains the basic economic activity and the Q'eqchi'es are willing to engage in non-agricultural activities provided they are able to reproduce at least a minimal agricultural basis. Almost all of those in Rubelpec who leave the village to do wage labour or to work as merchants return to the village when the basic activities of the maize cycle have to be performed.

Secondly, the Q'eqchi'es are willing to become involved in market-oriented activities, to produce cash crops or to raise animals for the sake of selling them provided they are able to secure their subsistence production. Almost all of them produce a large part of the maize and other food crops and animals that they consume within the household, even when it requires them to rent land or to buy chemical and other inputs to increase the productivity of the land. In the latter case the market is instrumentalized in order to meet the objective of themselves producing a large part of their food crops and animals for consumption.

The desire to balance first agricultural and non-agricultural activities and secondly subsistence and market-oriented production and activities remains a basic aspect of Q'eqchi' economic strategies. This makes sense for two profane reasons. On the one hand, the Q'eqchi'es have to engage in market-oriented or non-agricultural activities because they cannot produce all the things they need in their household economy themselves. They have to earn money to buy these things. Moreover, they are clearly willing to become involved in these kinds of activities to improve their material situation.

On the other hand, these activities can become very risky because they depend on factors and actors that the Q'eqchi'es cannot control. They involve becoming dependent on aj Kastii and so require some level of trust in them. This trust cannot be taken for granted and has a problematic character. Consequently, Q'eqchi'es wish not to become too dependent on market-oriented or non-agricultural activities and to retain the basic aspects of their subsistence agriculture; this wish makes sense from a profane point of view.

Subsistence agriculture and customary religion

Nevertheless, this profane logic is complemented by clear religious reasoning. The distinction between subsistence and market-oriented production itself stems not only from analytical categories I consider to be

useful as a researcher. The Q'eqchi'es also differentiate between production for their own consumption and practices which focus on making money. In Chapter Four it was pointed out that this distinction has a religious background: customary religion is intimately linked to subsistence agriculture. Just to summarise the argument, customary religion specifies a social and geographical unit in which there are direct relations between the Tzuultaq'a and the local community, *i.e.* not mediated by the market. The Tzuultaq'a provides food and other items that the Q'eqchi'es consume, and "alien" objects and animals are not accepted by the Tzuultaq'a in rituals or as sacrifices.

Only activities within the subsistence sphere such as cultivating maize and house-building provide occasions for performing customary or substitution rituals. The land the villagers of Samox rent in the Polochic valley and on which they cultivate maize is included in the area that is marked by the four local mountains which the pasawink visit when performing their mayejak. By way of emphasizing the thirteen central Tzuultaq'as in their mayejak the villagers of Rubelpec are able to relate this ritual to the land which they rent for subsistence purposes in distant parts of the Q'eqchi' region.

The relevance of customary religion to subsistence agriculture has several consequences. First, customary religion provides a symbolic or meaningful support for the priority given to the reproduction of subsistence agriculture before entering into market-oriented or non-agricultural activities. Customary religion is closely related to the Q'eqchi'es' desire to optimize maize production for their own consumption. This basic aspect of their economic strategies holds both for households in communities in which customary religion is dominant - Xalihá and Samox - and in villages in which customary religion has been adapted to Bible-oriented religion - Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch.

Secondly, customary religion portrays important elements of subsistence production, such as the house and maize, as "persons". It will be shown below that this way of perceiving maize and houses has important consequences for the labour-forms to be practised in cultivating maize and building houses and for the ways the Q'eqchi'es deal with land dedicated to cultivating maize. The personalized view of maize and houses limits the extent to which they can be dealt with instrumentally. An example of this is the idea that the Q'eqchi'es should not actually sell any maize because it has been granted to them by the Tzuultaq'a.

Thirdly, customary religion stipulates that the community as a whole ought to address the Tzuultaq'a. Only in communities in which it is impossible for the whole community to present itself to the Tzuultaq'a in the mayejak rituals for example do the Q'eqchi'es turn individually to the Tzuultaq'a; but the latter clearly prefers to deal with the pasawink as representatives of the whole community. In this way the Tzuultaq'a "emphasizes" the communitarian aspects of Q'eqchi' economic strategies.

Fourthly, the reluctance of Q'eqchi'es to become involved in commercial relations with aj Kastii is in line with the ways in which they map their life-world according to customary religion. These ways underscore the differences between those who belong to the above mentioned social and geographical unit - the members of the local community - and outsiders; among those outsiders customary religion differentiates between Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii (see Chapter Two). Thus customary religion relates to the Q'eqchi'es' cautious attitude to market-integration which includes increasing dependence on aj Kastii.

The explanations the villagers of Samox give for the cardamom and coffee disease are expressive of the way in which distrust of aj Kastii can easily become linked with customary interpretations. They relate the appearance of the disease to intervention by Moscamed and ANACAFé in their village and to the villagers' neglect of their ritual obligations towards the Tzuultaq'a. The consequences of both are negative. In this case the villagers made use of the special capacity of customary religion to make sense of a situation of dependency on nature (see Chapter Four) in order to "solve" in a symbolic way even their problems with cash crops.

Market-integration and Bible-oriented religion

This reluctance and distrust of aj Kastii should be qualified, however. In the previous section and in Chapter Two it was shown that the level of distrust varies from village to village and that several respondents indicated that access to the Word of God plays an important role in reducing this distrust. Indeed, Bible-oriented religion encourages the Q'eqchi'es to identify themselves as believers in God, a category that may include both Q'eqchi'es and aj Kastii. Bible-oriented religion encourages the Q'eqchi'es to overcome their distrust of the latter and to become involved in commercial relations with them. In this way Bible-oriented religion favours their market-integration.

Moreover, in Chapter Four the positive attitude of Bible-oriented religion to economic performance and improvement was discussed with reference to the motivations of Catholics to become catechists or to convert to an evangelical church. Bible-oriented religion advocates the avoidance of "vices" that might impair the economic performance of believers. In the eyes of my respondents the Word of God impels them to work hard, to lead industrious lives and to improve their economic lot. In addition, the above mentioned factors are not the only ones that explain economic stratification. Several respondents in each village told me that willingness to work hard and to take initiatives is one of the reasons that explain why some are doing better in economic terms than others.

In fact, there is a close relationship between economic performance and the role Bible-oriented religion plays in the lives of individual respondents. In Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec the leading catechists such as

ministros and instructors have above average net incomes. In Rubelpec the six respondents with the highest net incomes (categories VIII and IX of Table 7.15) are all either leading catechists or leading members of evangelical churches. Among those with the lowest net incomes in Rubelpec are several who have a serious drinking problem. Drinking may not affect agricultural production very much, but in activities that require discipline such as wage labour - especially important in Rubelpec - it may have a much more negative effect. The woman of the man in one of these households told me: 'Guillermo used to pray a lot before he went to buy and sell merchandise and his profits were high. But now he does not earn much money any more. He drinks a lot, goes to another woman and does not pay attention to God any more'. The intimate relationship between God, moral behaviour and economic success is apparent in her words.

A similar positive relationship between the importance of Bible-oriented religion and economic performance is strongly suggested by the fact that in Chaabilchoch the evangelicals in general do very well in terms of net income. Their average net income (3914.83 quetzales) is more than one thousand quetzales higher than the average for all the households. Of the eight highest net income earning households five belong to an evangelical church. This performance by the evangelicals is even more remarkable given the fact that they have hardly any access to the Local Development Committee, one of the factors that influence opportunities to do well in economic terms.

In short, Bible-oriented religion has no direct relationship with market-oriented economic activities such as customary religion has with subsistence economy, but Bible-oriented religion is interrelated with doing well in market-oriented activities.

7.3.2 *Selectively adopting external inputs*

Another basic characteristic of the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies is their selectiveness in adopting external inputs and accepting projects offered to them by outsiders. In the previous section it was shown that hybrid maize seeds, pesticides and new methods of planting maize are rejected by all the villagers in the four communities. On the other hand, the curative services offered by the representante agrícola or veterinarian promoters in coordination with DIGESEPE are accepted by almost all the villagers. The acceptance of gramoxone, chemical fertilizers and external technology for use in cultivating vegetables is variable.

One of the considerations the various Q'eqchi'es take into account in adopting external inputs and projects is that this adoption should not make them too dependent on aj Kastii. Willingness to accept external inputs and projects depends on how the villagers perceive them. As a result, the Q'eqchi'es reject hybrid seeds and most of them do not use chemical fertilizers. They have their own varieties of maize seeds, each adapted to

specific soil conditions and altitude. One of the disadvantages of hybrid maize seeds is that the Q'eqchi'es cannot use part of the maize crop as seed for the new maize cycle. They have to buy hybrid seed at the beginning of every new cycle, which makes them very dependent on aj Kastii who sell these seeds. There is no similar compulsion to continue using chemical fertilizers, but the fact that they are expensive and that the aj Kastii virtually monopolize the sale of these products makes the Q'eqchi'es think twice before adopting them. In three of the four communities discussed above the villagers decided not to use them while the village in which chemical fertilizers are used has better access to the market; this enables them to avoid monopolies.

Another important factor in this respect is the question of who takes the initiative. The fruitful cooperation between the cooperative and bakery in Rubelpec and INACOP and INTECAP respectively is clearly related to the fact that it was the villagers themselves who took the initiative to start these projects and only afterwards sought assistance from the agencies. Fourteen cooperatives in the Poptún area also illustrate the importance of who takes the initiative. The government agency FYDEP forced the villagers in these communities to form cooperatives in order to receive land titles. As soon as they received the titles the members disbanded the cooperatives and divided the land into individual plots.[23]

The Q'eqchi'es' willingness to engage in projects or to accept external inputs in the end depends greatly on whether these projects or inputs serve to meet one or more of the basic elements of their economic strategies. Profitability is clearly one of the reasons why the villagers of Rubelpec have continued the chicken and cow raising projects; the vaccination programme for animals has also had the opportunity to prove its usefulness. Gramoxone turned out to benefit agricultural production at relatively low costs.

However, profitability is just one element that the Q'eqchi'es take into consideration in their economic strategies. For instance, the fact that the villagers of Rubelpec overcame their reservations and use chemical fertilizers can be in part explained by the fact that these fertilizers enable them to meet their basic objective of themselves producing a considerable part of the maize they consume. In Rubelpec this objective can only be met by using chemical fertilizers.

External inputs and religion

All these profane considerations make sense to the Q'eqchi'es in deciding to accept or reject external inputs, but there is more. Q'eqchi' religion influences these matters as well. First, as regards the ways the Q'eqchi'es perceive aj Kastii, Q'eqchi' religion is also related to their willingness to

[23]. Information provided by an INACOP spokesman in Poptún.

accept external inputs they can only acquire from aj Kastii. Both customary and Bible-oriented religion have their relevance in this respect. There is not just a coincidence between the level of trust of aj Kastii on the one hand and the level of acceptance of external inputs and of willingness to engage in projects offered by them on the other. Both levels go from low to high from Xalihá to Samox to Chaabilchoch to Rubelpec. Interestingly, in the first two villages the customary principle dominates while in the latter two the Bible-oriented principle is dominant.

Secondly, the Q'eqchi'es are not willing to accept external technology or inputs that contradict the meanings they attribute to important elements of their economic strategies. These meanings can have a religious character. For instance, the fact that the Q'eqchi'es do not accept hybrid seeds is not due only to reluctance to become very dependent on aj Kastii. The adoption of hybrid seeds contradicts essential aspects of customary religion. In the Q'eqchi'es' eyes maize is the most important source of life. It is provided by the Tzuultaq'a and God and is therefore imbued with a spirit. In order to achieve a good maize harvest this spirit has to be reactivated in the planting rituals. The adoption of hybrid seeds would seriously disrupt this logic. The DIGESA employees I talked to about this issue were unaware of this logic.

To give another example: several extension workers were surprised that the Q'eqchi'es are unwilling to give up their group-wise method of planting even in communities where land shortage is very severe. The men who plant the maize stand in a row and then move forward making holes with a stick and planting the seeds. In order to increase the number of plants per square metre DIGESA employees advise the Q'eqchi'es to give up this group-wise planting method, insensitive to the fact that this communitarian way of planting is essential to the Q'eqchi'es collective presentation of themselves to the Tzuultaq'a and God and reactivating the life of the seed.

7.3.3 *Dealing with labour*

The meaning attributed to maize planting is just one of many examples of customary religion influencing labour forms. In the previous section a distinction was made between individual, group-wise and communitarian forms of labour. These forms are all used by the Q'eqchi'es and each occasion requires a specific form. Just to summarise the argument, individual labour refers to tasks that each household performs individually and from which only the individual household benefits. Communitarian labour is done jointly by the whole male or female population of the community and the whole community as such benefits from it. The individual household benefits from group-wise labour which is done by the women or men of several other households who are assisting the household in performing these tasks.

This distinction is closely related to the two ways the Q'eqchi'es deal with labour. On the one hand, labour is treated as something that is exchanged for something else (money, land, other labour) between individual households. In this case it is a production factor instrumental in achieving maximum production or profit for the individual households; it may thus be classified as a commodity. On the other hand, labour is something that refers to membership of the community. In this case someone performs labour as a service to the community and the individual household benefits from the results which the community as a whole achieves. In this case labour cannot be conceptualized as a commodity because there are no clear exchange relations between households.

As well as the three labour forms both approaches to labour can be found among the Q'eqchi'es. Labour is dealt with as a commodity in cases where the labour of which the individual household disposes is insufficient to fulfil tasks that belong to the individual household. In this case labour is hired from other households. Labour is treated in a non-commoditized way where community tasks are performed in a communitarian form.

Group-wise labour is thus a special case. It refers to tasks that belong to the individual household, such as maize planting from which only one specific household benefits, but this group-wise labour is not dealt with as a commodity. Clearly, group-wise labour embodies an element of reciprocity. For example in maize planting, one neighbour helps the other plant his maize and the next day the other reciprocates. However, the reason for performing group-wise labour does not stem from this reciprocity, but is provided by customary religion. Customary religion holds that the fulfilment of specific tasks that belong to the individual household depend on a contract to be made with the Tzuultaq'a and God and in order to do so the Tzuultaq'a and God require the villagers to present themselves as a community rather than as individual households.

In Chapter Four the fact that customary religion portrays this contract in a very practical and reciprocal way was discussed; thus group-wise labour can be seen as a "commodity" in terms of an exchange with the Tzuultaq'a and God but not in terms of an exchange between visible social actors. For example, in the case of maize planting group-wise labour becomes one of the obligations the Q'eqchi'es have to meet in order to receive a good harvest from the Tzuultaq'a and God. Group-wise labour is exchanged for a good harvest. In short, the "commoditization" of labour in the case of group-wise maize planting in the relation between the Q'eqchi'es and the Tzuultaq'a and God entails the non-commoditized character of labour in terms of the relations between the Q'eqchi'es. Customary religion makes this paradox possible and even necessary.

On the whole, where customary religion is relevant - mainly in subsistence activities - communitarian or group-wise labour is practised, labour is not commoditized and the community mediates between the households and the Tzuultaq'a and God. In those cases in which customary religion has no relevance - mainly in market-oriented activities - individual labour is practised, extra labour is hired in and an instrumentalist or commoditized logic holds sway. In these very specific ways the Q'eqchi'es interpret and deal with their economic interests. All this may seem rather abstract, but it will be made explicit in the pages that follow as regards the various tasks that are performed individually, group-wise and in a communitarian way.

The Q'eqchi'es practise communitarian forms of labour in cases such as keeping paths and community buildings clean, constructing such buildings and tilling community lands. From a practical point of view it is obvious that these community tasks should be performed in a communitarian way which entails non-commoditized labour. By contrast, the cultivation of cash crops by individual households prompts the Q'eqchi'es to practise an individual form of labour and to pay for extra labour. The commoditization of labour in this framework coincides with the fact that the cultivation of cash crops is not complemented by customary or substitution rituals.

The absence of these rituals in the case of cash crops has to do with the fact that the main cash crops, *i.e.* cardamom and coffee, have a cycle that covers several years; there is no fixed time when they have to be planted and there is an extended period of several months during which the coffee and cardamom can be harvested. As a result, there are no specific times of year which would make it apparent from a religious point of view that specific rituals should be performed. However, the absence of customary rituals during the cycle of cash crop production is most of all related to the fact that the Q'eqchi'es consider these crops to have an "alien" origin and destiny which escapes the logic of concluding a contract with the Tzuultaq'a in order to secure a good harvest. Of course, in their mayejak rituals the villagers of Samox ask the Tzuultaq'a for a good harvest of coffee and cardamom and they conceive of these crops' diseases as a lesson from the Tzuultaq'a, but even they do not perform rituals at specific points within these crops' cycles and they do not consider coffee and cardamom to have a spirit. The idea of life as granted by the Tzuultaq'a to the villagers does not apply in the case of cash crops so there is no need to present themselves in a communitarian or group-wise way to the Tzuultaq'a. Because customary religion has no direct relevance individualization and commoditization of labour can take place.

By contrast, maize planting is done group-wise by almost everyone in each of the four villages I studied in detail and labour is not treated as a commodity. Some of my respondents told me that they plant group-wise

because the work is hard. Doing the work group-wise would reduce the effort and the job could be done more rapidly. This justification does not convince me. Especially in the case of planting it does not seem to be evident that doing the job group-wise, going from one plot of land to another, results in any time and energy saving compared to each man planting his maize individually on his "own" plot of land. No equipment is used that might be more effectively employed by a group than by a single individual. Moreover, if this reason were valid, why would not they work group-wise in cash crop production for the same reason? In brief, there may be other explanations to consider in addition to practical reasons.

The respondents consider planting maize to be a cheerful activity. They enjoy doing it as a group in a relaxed atmosphere. They told me this cheerful atmosphere is necessary for the maize to grow well. There is continuity between the vigil the night before the planting and the work on the land and this serves to reinforce the life of the seed. Both the vigil and the group-wise labour make sense from the point of view of the need to jointly reactivate the spirit of the seed. Both elements serve the need to present themselves as a group representing the community to the Tzuultaq'a and God in order to fulfil their part of the contract with them. In the case of planting maize the distinction between religious and economic aspects may be useful to the researcher; to the Q'eqchi'es these aspects are inseparable. Customary religion is intertwined with the group-wise planting of maize; the former provides a meaningful foundation for the latter.

Practical reasons for working group-wise make sense in the case of another activity that was discussed in the preceding section: house building. Building can be done more effectively in a group than individually. However, for the same reasons as those mentioned in relation to maize planting, group-wise labour does not make sense from the practical point of view in the case of two other activities: land clearance and maize harvesting.

These three activities - land clearance, maize harvesting and house building - occupy an intermediate position between the extremes of cash crop cultivation and maize planting. These activities clearly belong predominantly to the subsistence sphere and to the standard tasks of individual households. Land is cleared mainly for maize cultivating. A piece of land has to be cleared only once every five to seven years for cardamom and coffee production. Many of the building materials are fetched from the common waste lands. Moreover, both maize and the house are imbued with a spirit emanating from the Tzuultaq'a or God. Consequently, in line with the above mentioned logic one would expect to find group-wise labour, dealt with in a non-commoditized way and the performance of customary or substitution rituals.

However, the picture is mixed as regards these three activities: some work group-wise while others work individually and - if necessary - hire extra labour. Some treat labour as a commodity while others do not. There are two explanations for the fact that they do not all work group-wise and

treat labour in a non-commoditized way. First, customary religion may be relevant to these activities but its importance is not as compelling or urgent as in the case of planting maize. Obviously, the need to fulfil one's obligations to the Tzuultaq'a while harvesting maize is less pressing than when maize is being planted. In the latter case the Tzuultaq'a still has to be convinced of the Q'eqchi'es' willingness to stick to their part of the contract while in former this willingness has been proved and the reward has been received. In addition, there is no need to jointly reactivate the spirit of maize during its harvest. This explanation is confirmed by the fact that the b'antioxink rituals are much less extensive and flowery than the planting rituals. In Chaabilchoch twenty per cent of respondents even told me they do not perform any b'antioxink rituals at all.

The same explanation can be put forward in the case of house building. Not all respondents were convinced that the house has a spirit, unlike maize. In Chaabilchoch one-third of respondents make no ritual observance when a building is finished. The situation regarding land clearance is similar to maize harvesting: the need to fulfil one's obligations to the Tzuultaq'a is not as pressing as in the case of planting maize. In terms of customary logic it is obvious that planting maize is more important than clearing land, harvesting maize or building a house.

However, particularly in the case of land clearance the fact that not everyone works group-wise can also be explained by the fact that communitarian mayejak rituals in Xalihá and Samox and individual mayejak rituals or substitution rituals in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec have already taken place immediately before this work. Several respondents told me that because of these preliminary rituals they feel that they have already paid attention to the Tzuultaq'a before the land clearance so specific rituals at the individual plot during clearance are not required. A similar argument may be valid in the case of harvesting maize and house building: given the fact that in these situations customary logic is not as pressing as in the case of planting maize several Q'eqchi'es consider the performance of the relevant rituals to be enough. There is no need for confirmation through group-wise labour. In Chaabilchoch almost all respondents pay ritual attention to these three activities.

In any case, the fact that several respondents told me that they were not sure which labour form to use for these three activities confirms the conclusion that they are caught in a dilemma between the fact that customary logic is not as pressing for these activities and the fact that this logic is still relevant. This dilemma has encouraged some respondents to abandon the performance of customary or substitution rituals and to let an instrumental and commoditized treatment of labour take over: hiring wage labour where individual labour is not sufficient.

Important activities in which the performance of customary rituals and the use of group-wise labour clearly do not coincide are the planting and harvesting of rice in Xalihá. Almost everyone works group-wise, but

there is considerable disagreement regarding the need to pay ritual attention to these activities. In the preceding section it was made clear that including rice with group-wise planting and harvesting of maize is done for practical reasons: both crops can be planted and harvested at the same time. The fact that the issue of ritual attention to rice, for example putting the rice seed on the altar next to the maize seed during the vigil on the night before planting and mentioning rice in prayers, has not been finally resolved is related to the fact that rice cultivation has been taken up recently and that it can be used both for consumption and for sale. The meaning to be attributed to rice is still an open matter.

Customary religion is not only relevant to activities that enter into the category of subsistence production; it is also related to the division of labour within the household. In general customary religion confirms the existing division of labour between men and women. The clearest example of this is that only men are allowed to plant maize (see Chapter Four). However, Bible-oriented religion plays a similar role in affirming this division of labour. This affirmation is the only example I have come across of Bible-oriented religion exercising any influence on labour issues. The general pattern of religion influencing labour issues is of customary religion demanding a non-commoditized and group-wise or communitarian form of labour because of its relevance to subsistence activities. In the absence of this relevance an instrumental or commoditized logic shapes labour.

7.3.4 *Dealing with land*

Land control patterns show a similar mixture of individual and collective forms. Individual households and the community as a whole share control over the land. Some communities emphasize community control; in others the households exercise the most effectively control.

In line with customary logic one would expect community control to be founded in customary religion. However, at present the relation between customary religion and communitarian land control is not as obvious as in the case of customary religion and communitarian or group-wise labour. Communitarian land control is exercised by the Local Development Committee but the tilling of community lands and the cleaning of trails and squares, for example, are not accompanied by customary rituals.

In the past this relation was much more obvious. In recent decades the Local Development Committee has taken over the tasks of communitarian land control from the so-called *yuwa' ch'och* or "chief of the land". The yuwa' ch'och used to supervise all land issues and was one of the leading pasawink. At present the mayejak rituals in particular continue to express the idea that land is a community matter. The community as a whole presents itself to the Tzuultaq'a at a mayejak in order to ensure good harvests on all the lands the community has access to.

Customary religion conceives of land as a "person", the skin of the Tzuultaq'a, and this conception is relevant in customary rituals. The communitarian way of presenting themselves to the Tzuultaq'a coincides clearly with the obligation the Q'eqchi'es attribute to the community to provide each of its members with at least a small piece of land to cultivate maize. Moreover, as was pointed out in the previous section, rental agreements among Q'eqchi'es are strongly influenced by personal relations. Even the villagers of Samox, who rent considerable quantities of land outside their village and who usually pay for the land they rent, do not perceive rented land as just a commodity. A personal relation with the owner is indispensable if one is to be able to rent land from him. The villagers perform planting rituals and work group-wise when the maize is going to be planted on these rented lands outside their village.

Nevertheless, on other occasions land is treated as a commodity. The Q'eqchi'es are willing to pay money to INTA for example for access to their lands in the community, and would clearly buy more land elsewhere if they had the money to do so. Moreover, every community member wants to have access to the best lands within the community.

In short, customary religion provides a meaningful support for communitarian land control and for treating land in a personalized way on those occasions when customary religion is relevant. On the other hand, on other occasions the Q'eqchi'es treat land in an instrumental way and as a commodity and individual households hold on to their access to specific plots of land.

7.3.5 *Economic individualization and stratification*

The rewards of economic activity go primarily to individual households. In this sense the economic strategies of the Q'eqchi'es give particular emphasis to the economic performance of individual households. As a result, economic stratification reaches quite a high level in the local communities, in some communities more than others.

However, the effects of economic stratification are alleviated by mutual assistance between households. I have no details on the quantities of products, services and money involved in mutual aid, but I have the impression that considerable exchanges take place in this respect. Probably the most important of these exchanges occur between households within the same kinship line. Both elements - the one encouraging further economic stratification and individualization and the other alleviating its effects, encouraging redistribution of resources and stressing communal responsibility - form part of the economic strategies of the Q'eqchi'es.

Religion plays a role in both elements. In the preceding pages it was made clear that Bible-oriented religion is related to performing well in terms of earning net income. Consequently, where some villagers are more open to Bible-oriented religion than others, this religion may contribute to increasing

economic stratification. This relation between Bible-oriented religion and doing well in market-oriented activities may involve two causalities. On the one hand, Bible-oriented religion may encourage individual Q'eqchi'es to do their utmost to earn money. On the other, those who perform well in market-oriented activities may be attracted to a form of religion that legitimates these activities. These causalities are not mutually exclusive and my data do not allow me to determine which one predominates.

Simultaneously, both kinds of religion may counteract the effects of economic stratification. Both encourage the Q'eqchi'es to help their fellow villagers who are suffering from a bad harvest or illness for example. Bible-oriented religion is related to specific practices in this respect such as the Catholic women's groups who visit households that are experiencing some kind of problem such as illness and evangelicals consider these visits and mutual assistance to be one of their central practices. Customary religion limits the effects of economic stratification by encouraging the community to see to it that every member has access to land. Moreover, the contributions the Q'eqchi'es are expected to make to customary religious feasts or to their church are related to the level of income they earn. Q'eqchi' religion has specific relevance to both the individual and the communitarian aspects of the economic strategies the Q'eqchi'es pursue.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Q'EQCHI' ECONOMY AND MODERNIZATION

8.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters the intervening actors and agencies and the local economic leaders were first of all discussed. Secondly, the main economic practices and basic aspects of the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies and their relationship with their religion were outlined. The relationships between Q'eqchi' religion and basic aspects of their economic strategies raise the question of whether the distinction between an economic and a religious field is still appropriate in analyzing Q'eqchi' social reality; it might suggest that we are dealing with a predominantly pre-modern condition.

There is much to be said on these and similar issues. In this concluding chapter on Q'eqchi' economy I will first try to classify the basic characteristics of Q'eqchi' economic strategies into pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern terms as outlined in the first chapter. Then, the field character of religion and economy will be discussed. This section will draw mainly on the material discussed in Chapter Seven. Of course, an analysis of Q'eqchi' economy cannot limit itself to Q'eqchi' economic strategies because their room for manoeuvre to carry through these strategies is limited by intervening actors and agencies and material factors. These limitations, the kind of influence these actors and agencies exert on the Q'eqchi'es and their power to do so will be discussed next. This will be based on the material presented in Chapter Six.

8.2 Q'eqchi' economic strategies: pre-modern, originally modern or contemporary modern?

The basic principle of the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies is that in all the aspects outlined above they articulate pre-modern and modern elements in a creolizing way. They want fundamentally to reproduce pre-modern elements of their economy, and provided this condition is fulfilled they are willing to engage in all kinds of modern economic activities. However, these activities must not be allowed to disrupt fundamental elements of their pre-modern economy and related religious meanings.

There are multiple examples in which this fundamental principle is expressed. First, the Q'eqchi'es are willing to engage in (modern) market-oriented agricultural and non-agricultural activities provided that they are

able to reproduce their (pre-modern) subsistence agriculture. The various Q'eqchi' households are quite flexible about the crops and animals they produce either for their own consumption or to sell. They are willing to develop market-oriented activities, but always with the proviso that they are able to meet this fundamental objective.

Secondly, the Q'eqchi'es will adopt and adapt selectively external (modern) technology and other (modern) elements introduced by way of projects on certain conditions. This adoption must not make them too dependent on aj Kastii, which confirms the (pre-modern) fact that trust in persons plays a crucial role in technology transfer. In addition, the modern inputs must support basic elements of their economic strategies if the Q'eqchi'es are to be convinced of the need to adopt them. It is not just the profitability of the inputs that plays a role in this respect; modern elements such as chemical fertilizers are used by the villagers of Rubelpec, for example, to achieve their pre-modern objective of themselves producing as much as possible of the maize they consume. Moreover, if modern inputs are to be accepted they must not contradict essential (pre-modern) customary religious meanings which the Q'eqchi'es attribute to basic elements of their strategies.

Thirdly, the Q'eqchi'es combine both (pre-modern) communitarian and group-wise labour with (modern) individual labour. This combination is related to the fact that they deal with labour both as a non-commodity (pre-modern) and in an instrumentalist and commoditized (modern) way. Just as the relevance of customary or Bible-oriented religion depends on the occasion, the various labour forms and treatments of labour are also occasion-specific. The relevance of customary religion largely determines which form or way of dealing with labour is practised.

Fourthly, the various forms of land control and the way the Q'eqchi'es deal with land show the same mix of pre-modern and modern elements. The various communities that have been presented above show a balance of communitarian (pre-modern) and individual household (modern) control of land. As in the case of labour their treatment of land in a personalized and non-commoditized (pre-modern) or instrumental and commoditized (modern) way depends on the occasion.

Finally, the various communities exhibit various levels of economic stratification, but all are seeking to achieve a balance between economic performance on the part of the individual households (modern) and the communitarian (pre-modern) responsibility they feel for those who are suffering the effects of illness or a bad harvest. This sense of responsibility alleviates the effects of economic stratification.

In short, the Q'eqchi'es are not just on the pre-modern side; they usually talk about economic matters in secular and profane ways and sometimes are eager to improve their economic situation and learn about new possibilities for doing so. This eagerness and willingness to learn makes their economic strategies quite dynamic and flexible. The introduction of

cardamom production is one of several examples in this respect. Before the 1970s no Q'eqchi' had ever produced cardamom. When some large landowners started to produce this product in the 1970s, because prices were high, and when aj Kastii merchants saw new opportunities for making a profit, the first Q'eqchi'es followed suit. Since then cardamom production has become one of their most important sources of income. However, the Q'eqchi'es are not completely on the modern side. Their priority is to secure and guarantee the reproduction of fundamental aspects of their existing and pre-modern economic practices and meanings before entering into modern experiments. The Q'eqchi'es construct their economic strategies from both indigenous or pre-modern and external or modern elements.

The characteristics that have so far been classified as modern fit both the categories of originally and contemporary modern as discussed in Chapter One. However, in line with Giddens it makes sense to characterize the articulation or creolization of pre-modern and modern elements as typical of an originally modern condition. This characterization is supported by the ways in which religion and economy are interrelated among the Q'eqchi'es: they are interrelated in a combination of pre-modern and modern ways. On the one hand, the direct ways in which customary religion is related to almost all the pre-modern aspects of the five features discussed should be qualified as pre-modern. Customary religion is intimately linked to subsistence agriculture, to communitarian, group-wise and non-commoditized labour, to a non-commoditized conception and communitarian control of land, to redistributive practices within the community; it also clearly underscores the Q'eqchi'es' selectiveness in adopting external inputs. It is impossible to separate the economic from the ritual aspects of maize planting, for example. Activities such as group-wise planting have both an economic and a religious character. Religion and economy are inextricably intertwined when customary religion is relevant. On these occasions representations of nature (the land) and social relations (the community cultivating the land) have a religious character.

On the other hand, the relations between Bible-oriented religion and performing well in the market-oriented sphere for example have no direct character; they are mediated by the religiously based moral impetus to work hard and put one's life in order, and by encouragement to overcome distrust of aj Kastii. Bible-oriented religion allows for a profane interpretation of land and other production factors and a commoditized and instrumentalist logic holds sway. From the Bible-oriented point of view no religious relevance obstructs such a logic.

In the light of this mixture of pre-modern and modern ways of interrelating religion and economy, does it still make sense to interpret Q'eqchi' religion and economy in terms of separate fields, which is a feature of an originally modern condition? I think it does. To begin with, in the case of Q'eqchi' economy and religion there is a separation between religious and economic institutions and leaders, despite the fact that many religious

specialists claim that they have a responsibility to play an active role in economic matters as well. On the whole, economic institutions and leaders try to influence the Q'eqchi'es' economic practices and religious specialists their religious practices. Moreover, these specialists and institutions propagate an understanding of religious and economic matters mainly in their own specific terms (see Chapter Three and Chapter Six). Perhaps the main exceptions are the Pentecostal churches which portray social reality as the arena for the struggle between God and Satan, both with their adherents.

One might expect that the separation between economic and religious practices and meanings within the framework of a society differentiated into fields would be mainly expressed in the discourses and practices propagated by the specialists and institutions of the various fields. Among the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es one might expect that the separation between religious and economic matters would not have the same clear-cut traits. In any case, the Q'eqchi'es talk about their material reproduction and economic matters mainly in a profane way.

The distinction between religion and economy among the Q'eqchi'es is confirmed by the fact that the emphases on pre-modern or modern aspects in religious and economic matters do not simply coincide in the four villages that were studied in detail. Of course, as has already been noted, the dominance of customary or Bible-oriented religion coincides with the level of trust in aj Kastii and with the level of acceptance of external inputs: the dominance of the former religion is associated with low levels of trust and acceptance while the latter religion is related to relatively high levels. Moreover, in the community in which the villagers most clearly emphasize pre-modern economic elements in relation to modern elements - Xalihá - the customary principle predominates while the community with the highest level of acceptance of modern economic elements such as market-integration and external inputs - Rubelpec - the Bible-oriented principle is dominant. However, the villagers of Samox and Chaabilchoch exhibit similar levels of pre-modern and modern elements in their economic strategies but in the former village the customary principle dominates, while in the latter the Bible-oriented principle is dominant. Chaabilchoch is even stronger on pre-modern elements such as non-commoditized and group-wise labour and maize production and the levels of economic stratification are lower than in Samox.

Consequently, the emphases on pre-modern or modern elements in economic strategies on the one hand and religious matters on the other do not necessarily correspond. In this respect there is a relative autonomy of religion and economy vis-à-vis each other. On the one hand, the emphasis on pre-modern or modern elements in religion not only depends on a similar emphasis in economy; it is also influenced by the kind of pastoral policy implemented by religious specialists and their power resources. On the other hand, the emphasis on pre-modern or modern elements in

economy is not only related to a corresponding accent in religion; it depends also on factors such as varying opportunities to become involved in profitable market-oriented activities, differential need to become involved in non-agricultural activities because of shortage of land and the variable power of intervening agencies and actors promoting the adoption of modern elements.

In short, the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies which articulate pre-modern and modern elements are located in an originally modern context of an economic field which has limited but real autonomy vis-à-vis the religious field.

8.3 The influence of intervening actors and agencies and local leaders

This economic field includes not only the Q'eqchi'es themselves, but also intervening actors and agencies which limit the Q'eqchi'es' room for manoeuvre to pursue their strategies. Moreover, there are also local Q'eqchi' leaders who have an impact on the economic strategies of the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es. In the following pages the influence of these intervening agencies and actors and local leaders will be classified in terms of pre-modern, originally and contemporary modern and their power to exercise influence will be discussed.

The army

The army is without doubt the most powerful intervening agency. It can and often is willing to use military force; it is the only well-organized organization on the national level; it is able to control the civil administration and has a network of military commissioners and civil patrols in the local communities. It is challenged only by the guerrilla movement, but the latter poses no serious threat to the military and political power of the army. It has no significant support base among the population.

The army's influence is purely negative both in modern and pre-modern terms: it has destroyed some hundred communities, it forces men to waste their time on civil patrol duty and is one of the causes of the lack of civil security in the region. However, the army is unable to control every aspect of the local communities. Of course, every army order is obeyed immediately, but after a while the communities try to go their own way again. A clear example of the latter is the fact that in many areas - it is difficult to assess how many - the communities actually do not fulfil their civil patrol "duties".

Landlords

At first glance one would say that the influence of the landlords in the Q'eqchi' region is modern. The wide variety of their nationalities and origins and the fact that their products are exported to various parts of the world point to a modern globalizing economy. A closer look, however, reveals a different picture. Unlike the German finca owners at the beginning of this century most of the present landlords maintain a very low level of investment in their estates. Several landlords I spoke to gave me the impression that their principal interest in their estates is not to maximise production and profits, but to have a source of security and status in Guatemalan society.

This pre-modern characteristic of a society marked by stratified differentiation (see Chapter One on Luhmann) is confirmed by the kind of labour relations on the fincas. To be sure, in the course of the present century there have been indications that labour relations have become more capitalist. These indications include the abolition of the habilitación system and the vagrancy laws which legitimized extra-economic pressure and forced labour. Nevertheless, labour relations on the fincas retain strong semi-feudal characteristics. The plots of land given in usufruct to the mozos colonos which enable the finqueros to pay very low wages, the child labour of jornaleros during coffee harvest periods, the landlords' desire to control every aspect of "their" mozos colonos lives, to limit their access to education and health care and keep out trade unions which might affect their control: all these are features of a pre-modern condition which makes it difficult to speak of a Junker-model of transition towards capitalism. Given the fact that a major part of the Q'eqchi' population lives in these conditions the landlords' pre-modern influence is considerable.

Moreover, the fincas and haciendas constitute one of the main causes of the shortage of land in the Q'eqchi' region. The land shortage seriously limits the lands the Q'eqchi'es can dedicate to cash-crop production. After dedicating a certain amount of land to subsistence production not much is left for cash-crop production. This holds true not only for the land the mozos colonos have in usufruct on the fincas, but also for villages in the Q'eqchi' heartland which are experiencing the land shortage problem in its most severe form. Of course, the land shortage forces many Q'eqchi'es such as those in Rubelpec to look for modern non-agricultural ways to earn money, but these activities are not very profitable. The same destructive effects result from the land conflicts many landlords force upon the Q'eqchi' villages and the Human Rights violations these conflicts entail. The high frequency of finca administrators and landlords being involved in these conflicts illustrates the destructive influence of landlords in this respect.

The power resources landlords dispose of are considerable. They include access to capital and modern technology, contacts at the national and international level, status in Guatemalan society and, if necessary, army

backup. These are all resources the Q'eqchi'es are deprived of. They have few options for dealing with landlords. Mozos colonos can escape from the fincas and villagers can refuse to work on the fincas as jornaleros and look for alternative sources of money.

In brief, landlords seriously hamper the Q'eqchi'es' abilities to successfully pursue their economic strategies, especially their opportunities for becoming involved in modern and profitable economic activities.

Aj Kastii merchants

The influence of aj Kastii merchants is not very positive either. To be sure, without the presence of merchants the Q'eqchi'es would be unable to sell their cash crops and animals. Thus the influence of these merchants might be classified as modern. However, they seriously limit the Q'eqchi'es' profits from market-oriented production. They take advantage of the pre-modern absence of a properly working market system and differential access to capital. As a result, the Q'eqchi'es' access to capital and credit is even further limited and they are discouraged from engaging in market-oriented production and other modern activities. Moreover, the desire to avoid becoming too dependent on aj Kastii merchants prompts the Q'eqchi'es to limit the adoption of modern external inputs in their production.

Aj Kastii merchants have access to the same power resources as the landlords. In addition, in the absence of a properly functioning market system Q'eqchi' villagers find it difficult to avoid the influence of the merchants because they have few alternatives when it comes to selling their cash crops. In short, aj Kastii merchants seriously discourage the Q'eqchi'es from developing the modern aspects of their economic strategies.

INTA

The influence of INTA shares similarities with the impact of merchants. It is supposed to exercise a modern influence by promoting modern ownership relations, although the patrimonio agrario colectivo scheme involves balanced land control by the community (pre-modern) and individual households (modern). However, its land title programmes have had very little success and INTA has contributed to a state of confusion and insecurity concerning access to land. As such it is responsible for part of the Human Rights violations. An indication of INTA's influence is the fact that almost all the Q'eqchi' communities in the settlement areas - about half of the total Q'eqchi' communities - in one way or another have to deal with INTA concerning a crucial economic asset: their land. Moreover, INTA can always count on army backup.

In short, INTA has a negative impact on the economy of the local communities in general, particularly on the Q'eqchi'es' willingness to invest

in modern market-oriented production because of their insecure access to land.

Official and private development agencies

There are other intervening agencies that have some modernizing impact on the Q'eqchi' communities. These agencies include DIGESA, DIGESEPE, ICTA, INDECA, BANDESA, ANACAFé, Caminos Rurales, Moscamed, UNEPAR, INTECAP, DIGEBOS, INACOP and FEDECOVERA. They provide the villagers with scientifically developed technology, encourage the use of external inputs such as pesticides and chemical fertilizers, encourage the Q'eqchi'es to maximise market-oriented production and individual labour forms, offer them opportunities for wage labour and other non-agricultural activities, promote an instrumentalist approach to land and labour and assist in management and administrative tasks. All these elements can be categorized as modern. Moreover, DIGESA and DIGESEPE apply some participatory methods such as demonstration gardens and recruiting members of the local communities as representantes agrícolas.

Next, there are agencies such as Vitamina "A" and Defensores de la Naturaleza which promote both pre-modern (vegetable and maize production for their own consumption) and modern (cash crops) elements. These agencies show at least some sensitivity towards Q'eqchi' culture and economic strategies, but they started very recently so it is still too early to assess their results.

The development agencies have few power resources to draw on. If necessary, the local communities can do without the services they offer and these agencies are in no position to force the communities to adopt their services. Moreover, the Q'eqchi'es do not take the usefulness of expertise and scientifically developed technology for granted. Because the agencies are all staffed with aj Kastii they first have to make a strong effort to win the Q'eqchi'es' confidence before being able to work with them effectively.

As a result, their modern impact is limited. Of all the agencies DIGESA is the one which disposes of by far the most extensive network of offices and employees. However even DIGESA officials, as we have seen, have access to only a relatively small number of communities and within these communities to a limited number of households. Its operations are seriously curbed by insufficient funds. Moreover, the cases of DIGESA, the FEDECOVERA cooperatives and INTECAP make clear that the intervention by these agencies rarely takes into account essential aspects of the existing economic strategies, culture and indigenous technologies of the Q'eqchi'es. They just try to deskill and reskill the Q'eqchi'es (see Chapter One on Giddens) and make no effort to link their techniques and inputs to the existing economic strategies of the Q'eqchi'es themselves, which seriously reduces the impact of their work. These agencies have no access at all to the fincas.

In short, the modern impact of these agencies differs from one community to another, but on the whole the Q'eqchi' communities maintain a considerable autonomy towards the agencies and remain very selective in adopting modern inputs and technology offered by these agencies. They apply their own criteria in dealing with them.

Churches

In Chapter Three and Chapter Six the social commitment of the Catholic church and some evangelical churches was discussed. In brief, the pastoral agents who practise the concept of sacramentalist pastoral work have clearly modern characteristics. They perceive nature and social relations in an instrumentalist way. In their social projects they emphasize market integration and the adoption of external inputs. They promote scientifically developed technology and disqualify indigenous knowledge. They express a strong belief in progress and encourage individual believers to improve their economic performance. The latter holds true for most of the evangelical churches as well.

An important part of the work of those who adhere to the concept of liberating pastoral work is to counteract the negative consequences of interventions by other actors and agencies. The Department of Social Pastoral Work in Cobán initiated and continues to work with those, such as the internal refugees, who have suffered or are still suffering from army violence. The legal assistance granted by this Department and by the Vicariate of El Petén concentrate on the victims of land conflicts caused by landlord interventions and INTA inertia or complicity. The instruction to the multiplicadores de pastoral social on human rights and the rights of Guatemalan citizens under Guatemalan law must be seen as a reaction to the state of lawlessness created by the Guatemalan state.

However, liberating pastoral work does not just react to the damaging effects of others. Like in religious matters it tries to exercise an influence in which pre-modern and modern elements are combined. Pre-modern elements in the concept of liberating pastoral work include its anti-capitalist position and its distrust of market integration but these elements are not emphasized any more. Pastoral agents who apply this concept advocate community control of land and communitarian labour forms. The idea is to stimulate the local communities to take initiatives to improve their own situation. They try to optimize the use of the communities' existing resources rather than advocating the adoption of external resources, technology and inputs.

They offer modern elements such as external inputs and scientifically developed technology only when these elements complement or support the Q'eqchi'es' existing strategies. They intervene on a large scale only in cases of extreme need, such as receiving and safeguarding internal refugees. The modern elements these pastoral agents promote are the rule of law as

expressed in the legal assistance to Q'eqchi' communities, the condemnation of human rights violations, instructing local communities on how to claim their rights, and calling for reforms that would enable the farmers and peasants to modernize economically (land reform) and put an end to semi-feudal labour relations on the fincas.

In their efforts to influence the economy of Q'eqchi' households and communities the various churches in the region have several important advantages. They can build on the relations of confidence they have already established in the religious field, and on their network of catechists and other local leaders. Even more important, in promoting either Bible-oriented religion or both Bible-oriented and customary religion, churches legitimate the various economic elements and activities encouraged by these kinds of religion (see the preceding chapter).

However, in Chapter Three it was pointed out that relations of confidence between church leaders and Q'eqchi' communities and the former's influence on the religious discourse of the latter are not unconditional. Nor does having influencing on the religion of the Q'eqchi'es automatically lead to influencing their economic strategies.

Local economic leaders

Local leaders such as the representante agrícola are "brokers": both in terms of the framework of relations between the local community and intervening actors and agencies and in terms of articulating pre-modern and modern elements. On the one hand they represent intervening agencies and are responsible for transmitting to the local communities the modern inputs these agencies promote. On the other hand, in their own household economy they practise the same basic strategy of articulating pre-modern and modern elements with slightly more emphasis on the latter elements.

The Local Development Committee exemplifies this "broker" character. It was brought into being as a modern initiative by the state to augment its influence in the communities, and it is supposed to deal with INTA over land rights. However, the same committee promotes such pre-modern elements of Q'eqchi' economic strategies as community control of the land and joint cultivation of community land.

The importance of these communitarian activities, the number of other committees to be supervised and the question of whether the committee has a role to play in land title issues are clear indicators of the power of this committee in each community. In Samox, Chaabilchoch and Xalihá it does play such a role in land title issues because these communities are trying to make the best of a patrimonio agrario colectivo scheme, but in communities within a parcelamiento project or in the Q'eqchi' heartland - such as Rubelpec - the committee's role in land issues is limited.

Membership of the committee can be a source of power in the community. In Chaabilchoch several respondents told me that the committee

members picked out the largest and best plots of land for themselves when allocating plots of land to individual households. Moreover, the dominance of Catholics over evangelicals in Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec is reflected in the membership of the committee. In Chaabilchoch all the leading positions in the committee are occupied by Catholics and the present chairman wants to oust the two remaining evangelical members from it. According to him one of them committed adultery with a Catholic woman. In Rubelpec the committee has no evangelical members.

Another indication of the link between membership of the Local Development Committee and economic influence and performance is provided by the fact that in three of the four local communities that were studied in detail the average net income of committee members is considerably higher than the average net income of all community members: see Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: average net income of committee members and community members in four villages in quetzales

Villages	Average net income committee members	Average net income community members
Xalihá	1396.88	1451.21
Rubelpec	2700.01	1684.20
Samox	4039.44	2774.88
Chaabilchoch	4103.85	2941.40

These figures would seem to indicate that in Samox, Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec committee members derive economic advantage from their membership, but it may also be the case that those who do well in economic terms are chosen as committee members. These figures may also point to the fact that the community members who first settled in the community managed to get access to the best lands and formed the committee simultaneously. This could be the case in Chaabilchoch and Samox, but not in Rubelpec because this community has a long history. In any case, the conclusion can be justified that in communities in which the committee members can stay on as long as they like there is a relationship between economic performance and committee membership (Samox, Chaabilchoch and Rubelpec), while in the one community in which the members of the committee are elected every few years there is no such relation (Xalihá).

In general Q'eqchi' communities have to take care of their economic reproduction and survival without much help from intervening agencies and actors. For example The positive impact of the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the bishopric of Verapaz has not been able to compensate for the extreme negative economic consequences of the army and the landlords. The overall balance of these agencies and actors' influence tips towards the negative side. In implementing their economic strategies the large majority of Q'eqchi'es are seriously hindered by the landlords, the merchants, the army and INTA in particular.

In addition, material conditions such as erosion and the decreasing fertility of the land have caused them serious problems; these problems are intimately related to land shortage. The latter is at least partly due to the influence of landlords; it has forced the Q'eqchi'es to work their land over intensively, to start cultivating marginal lands and to cut down trees. A good example of land shortage creating ecological problems can be found in the Polochic valley. The Polochic river has always flooded the lower parts of the valley during the rainy season, but the problems associated with this flooding have increased greatly in the last two decades. The Q'eqchi' communities which first settled in the valley were later expelled to make way for haciendas. The Q'eqchi'es thus had to look for lands to cultivate on higher slopes of the Sierra de las Minas. They cut down trees and other vegetation which caused the rain to bring down increasing quantities of soil. As a result, the quality of the land on the slopes became degraded and increasing quantities of mud were washed into the river. This mud created sediment in the lower parts of the valley and made it increasingly difficult for the river water to find its way to lake Izabal. The flooding problem has become increasingly acute and prevents fertile lands from being cultivated.[1]

Another material problem that threatens to hamper the Q'eqchi'es' basic economic strategies is the fact that the limits of the agrarian frontier have become visible. Until recently the aim of many Q'eqchi'es to reproduce themselves as peasants and farmers could be met by migrating to settlement areas in the Petén and Izabal. Consequently, the agrarian frontier was pushed in a northern and eastern direction, but the end of this escape valve is near. What will happen when there is no more land available and what the consequences will be for the economic strategies of those who are left with insufficient land is difficult to say.

Nevertheless, up till now, despite the material conditions and negative influence of intervening actors and agencies, most of the Q'eqchi'es have had limited but real room for manoeuvre to practise their basic economic

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[1]. Information provided by the ministry of agriculture which together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and financed by the Dutch government has investigated these ecological problems.

strategies. They continue to articulate pre-modern and modern elements in a context which exhibits originally modern characteristics. The Q'eqchi'es are willing to adopt and adapt modern elements provided these elements coincide with their existing strategies and do not contradict important, often religiously-based meanings attributed to the ways they use to survive and improve their situation.

The conclusion is unavoidable that the terms pre-modern, originally and contemporary modern are very useful for classifying the basic aspects of Q'eqchi' economic strategies and analyzing the kinds of influence exercised by intervening actors and agencies. However, after classifying both these strategies and influences in these terms and evaluating the power of these intervening actors and agencies and the Q'eqchi'es' room for manoeuvre to pursue their strategies, we are left with no reason to suppose that the Q'eqchi'es are heading unavoidably towards modernity.

First, the intervening actors and agencies are not pushing them inevitably in a modern direction: their modernizing influence is rather limited and the impact of most of them is on the whole rather destructive not only on the pre-modern elements but even more so on the modern aspects of their economy. The prospect which the army, the landlords, the merchants and INTA offer the Q'eqchi'es is rather like a cruel vacuum between a pre-modern and modern condition. In addition, there are few grounds for expecting any process towards a Junker-style road to capitalism on the basis of the existing landed estates.

Secondly, the Q'eqchi'es own economic strategies do not focus on full-blown modernity either. They are trying to continue articulating modern and pre-modern aspects as part of a creolizing and flexible strategy. Of course, the Q'eqchi'es are familiar with the phenomenon of wage labour among themselves, of buying, selling and renting land, of using inputs and other modern elements in their agricultural production, but there is no reason to expect a peasant road to capitalism either as long as they are able to continue with their existing economic strategies. This route is not only obstructed by the land shortage created by the landlords and population growth, but also by the Q'eqchi'es' own drive to reproduce their subsistence agriculture, to maintain some level of community control over land and labour forms, to go on being selective in adopting external inputs and to limit the effects of economic stratification.

The combined effects of the influence of material conditions and of intervening actors and agencies and the economic strategies of the Q'eqchi'es themselves point to a very specific economic configuration which combine particular pre-modern and modern elements.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS, CONSIDERATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

9.1 Introduction

The final chapter of any scientific book is usually dedicated to answering the central research questions that were posed in the first chapter. This book is no exception to the rule. The central research questions will be dealt with in the first section of this chapter. Based on the conclusions of this discussion the central concept of creolization, both as an act of meaning-making and as a social process, will be set out and developed in the following sections. This concept will first be related to the ways in which the Q'eqchi'es process information and data and structure their discourse. This discussion of data processing will shed some interesting light on the relationship between cognitive processes and the act of creolization. Secondly, the social conditions of creolization among the Q'eqchi'es will be discussed. Thirdly, the growing importance and risks related to creolization in the contemporary globalizing context will be dealt with. Finally, some comments will be made on the act of research itself among the Q'eqchi'es as an act of creolization and the problems that are inherent in such research.

9.2 The Q'eqchi'es and modernization

The *leitmotiv* of this book has been an attempt to relate the characteristics of the Q'eqchi'es' social reality to the various meanings that are attributed to the concept of modernization in the literature. Having made explicit the meanings of the terms pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern and having discussed Q'eqchi' religion and economy, some general conclusions can be drawn.

To begin with, the Q'eqchi'es' practices and meanings in the religious and economic fields as well as the influences of intervening actors and agencies in these fields can be classified in terms of these three concepts. Pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern are terms that make sense with reference to the Q'eqchi'es' religion and economy. The discourse of modernization has allowed me to translate my data and information on the Q'eqchi'es into a language that is spoken among academics. Of course, to a certain extent I am inclined to see what I am trained to see and this academic language has certainly influenced the way in which I have classified my experiences among the Q'eqchi'es right from

the start. As a result, the question of whether the discourse of modernization can be applied to the religion and economy of the Q'eqchi'es has a certain rhetorical character. Nevertheless, I would claim that the systematic and consistent way in which I have tried to proceed in my fieldwork, analysis and presentation, making as explicit and controllable as possible the various levels and steps of my procedure, have made the plausible conclusion that there is a basic concordance between the meanings attributed to the three terms mentioned above and elements of the Q'eqchi'es' religion and economy.

Moreover, I believe that the meanings that these three terms point to touch the heart of the problems, dilemmas and issues the Q'eqchi'es have to deal with in relation to their religion and economy. Of course, not all the meanings that were attributed to the three terms in the first chapter are relevant in the case of the Q'eqchi'es, but those that are do matter to them very much. These meanings relate to a personalized view of nature and a more commoditized treatment of its elements such as the land. They point to communitarian rituals vis-à-vis the Tzuultaq'a and to individual moral responsibility towards God. They deal with the need to "solve" in a symbolic way the Q'eqchi'es' dependence on nature and the reinforcement of Bible-oriented Selbstzwang when making a break with one's individual past. They relate to personal trust and distrust as key issues of social communication and reproduction and the need to settle land rights. They point to the relations between communitarian, group-wise and individual labour. They deal with the combination of subsistence and market-oriented production and activities. They are about both indigenous and scientifically developed knowledge. They point to rituals for improving the harvest and to chemical fertilizers. They deal with both the spirit of maize and the price of cardamom. All these crucial elements of the religion and economy of the Q'eqchi'es refer to the central meanings of these three terms.

The relevance of the meanings attached to the terms pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern in the case of the Q'eqchi'es shows that these terms can be meaningful outside of the Western world. These meanings point to crucial processes and issues of life on the peripheries as well. The issues and problems implied in these three terms are not just Western phenomena.

But in the light of the relevance of these three terms in the case of Q'eqchi' religion and economy how are we to conceptualize modernization and to understand its role among the Q'eqchi'es? In order to put forward a plausible interpretation I propose to return to discussing the relation between "structure" and "agency". In Chapter One it was suggested that these two terms embody different perspectives from which to look at social reality; consequently they highlight different aspects of social reality. In general "structure" points to the social relations and discourses that influence, or "structure" the practices and meanings of the social actors concerned. They become inculcated in the actors themselves in the form of

dispositions and interpretative frameworks. In the case of the Q'eqchi'es these influences have been analyzed using the terms intervening actors and agencies. The "agency" point of view highlights the ability of the social actors themselves to partially supersede either intentionally or non-intentionally these structuring influences. They have a limited but real ability to increase their knowledge, to modify their practices accordingly and to help shaping social relations and discourses.

These complementary viewpoints may also be useful in understanding the role which modernization plays in the life of the Q'eqchi'es. In an analogous argument to the relation between "structure" and "agency" I would say that the themes and dilemmas raised by modernization "structure" the religious and economic problems and issues which the Q'eqchi'es face in their daily lives. The Q'eqchi'es are influenced by intervening actors and agencies; they draw on their own traditions, practices and meanings and are conditioned by their natural context as they face problems and dilemmas of modernization that set the agenda of their religious and economic practices and meanings. In Chapter Five and Chapter Eight the issues, problems, dilemmas and paradoxes which refer to the relations between pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern characteristics have been marked as crucial and central to their religion and economy.

However, setting the agenda is not the same as forcing the Q'eqchi'es to move in an ever more modern direction. There are three main reasons that suggest that the Q'eqchi'es are not simply being forced into a unidirectional process from a pre-modern to an originally or contemporary modern condition. First, in Chapter One it was stressed that modernity and modernization are phenomena that are themselves about dilemmas, paradoxes and contradictions rather than linear developments and unequivocal forces and factors influencing social change. The idea of development laws that force social actors to trade in pre-modern elements for originally and contemporary modern aspects has to be refuted. Nor is there any reason to suggest that modern is necessarily better or more attractive than pre-modern: the founding-fathers of sociology have already pointed to very undesirable dimensions of modernity (see Chapter One).

Secondly, as regards both their religion and their economy, intervening actors and agencies are not just forcing the Q'eqchi'es into a clear-cut modern direction. In Chapter Five and Chapter Eight it was made clear that these actors and agencies do not only exercise a modern influence; some of them partially obstruct any scenario pointing to more modern characteristics (landlords, merchants, INTA). Others are very inefficient in promoting modern elements (DIGESA, DIGESEPE) and yet others also promote pre-modern elements (clergy applying the concept of liberating pastoral work). Modern globalizing influences hardly reach the Q'eqchi'es directly. They take on localized forms and reach the Q'eqchi'es through intermediary actors and agencies that intervene in their life-world and thus

become embedded in local interfaces with their specific interests, power relations and forms of communication. The outcome of this "filtering" by intermediaries in the case of the Q'eqchi'es is surely not an unequivocal reinforcement of modern features.

Thirdly, even if the influence of these intermediaries were unambiguously modern, the analysis of Q'eqchi' religion and economy has shown that they are not able to determine the Q'eqchi'es' practices and meanings. The latter have a limited but real capacity to decide themselves on their practices and meanings. The dilemmas and problems raised by modernization are complemented by the creolizing "agency" of the Q'eqchi'es themselves. Their creolizing way of dealing with modernizing problems and issues, which articulates modern and pre-modern elements, means that if it is up to them they are not heading in an unequivocally modern direction either.

In using the concept of creolization to characterize the Q'eqchi'es' ability to respond to modernizing problems and issues, I have extended the original meaning which Hannerz attributes to this concept. He writes about creolization in the sense of the articulation or mixing of aspects stemming from the endogenous cultures of social actors on the one hand and elements coming to them from global flows of meaning on the other.[1] I would say that creolization is not only about the synthesizing of endogenous and exogenous, internal and external elements, but also of pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern aspects. Thus I use the term in a wider sense than the merely cultural one and I locate it in the framework of an analysis of power relations. The concept of creolization has proved to be very useful as a means of understanding the basic ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with problems and issues of modernization relating to their religion and economy.[2] It has proved fruitful to apply this concept in a framework of a social analysis which includes interfaces between "ordinary" actors and intervening agencies and which takes into account asymmetrical power relations and unequal access to power resources.

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[1]. Hannerz 1992: 261-267. Hannerz for his part draws on linguistic theory in which the term creolization is used to refer to processes of mixing and merging of two languages out of which a new or third language arises. In this theory occasionally a difference is made between creolization and hybridization pointing to various degrees of merging and mixing of languages. I do not adopt this difference of terminology. Moreover, I want to call attention to the difference between the general way in which Hannerz uses the term creolization and the specific meanings attributed to the English word "Creole" and the Spanish term "Criollo". I use the term creolization in this general sense without implying these specific meanings.

[2]. Concerning religion Rostas and Droogers write about the mixing and mingling of beliefs and practices from different religious sources in a long-term process of ever-evolving bricolage marking the popular use of popular religion in Latin America (Rostas, Droogers 1993: 10-11).

The capacity of the Q'eqchi'es to articulate their continuous invention[3] or reinvention of tradition with selectively adopted and adapted external elements from intervening agencies, to combine the selective continuation of pre-modern elements with selectively adopted and adapted modern aspects, means that they do not just stick to a defensive orthodoxy which rejects all modern and external elements. On the contrary, they are quite aggressive where learning Spanish for example is concerned. They clearly want to learn this second language and are not worried about a possible loss of identity or other cultural consequences connected to this learning. They opt for bilingualism and in reply to my questions about it almost all my respondents told me that learning Spanish would not entail the loss of their own language or a depreciation of their own *na'leb'*, or culture, in any way. On the other hand, the preceding chapters have made clear that they do not just adopt any external or modern influence either.

In emphasizing this creolizing capacity of the Q'eqchi'es with regard to pre-modern and modern elements I do not agree with Richard Wilson when he writes about '... an inner clash, a volcanic conflict of two worlds that both exist within [them - hs]'.[4] Again, he has tended to generalize too much on the basis of his data stemming from the war-torn areas and the "brokers" in an urban context. Problems in interrelating and articulating elements from internal and external sources and pre-modern and modern elements, appear especially acute among these special categories of Q'eqchi'es. However, in the case of my respondents it was not the conflictive, the problematic or the clash which came to the fore, but rather the creolizing. There is no desperate seeking refuge in one of both extremes of the exclusively pre-modern or modern, the articulation of elements of both is predominant.

In short, the concepts of modernization and creolization are very useful for understanding the Q'eqchi'es' religion and economy, but only after the meaning of the concept of creolization has been expanded and the concept of modernization has been modified. Problems and issues of modernization touch the heart of what the religion and economy of the Q'eqchi'es are about but despite the increasing importance of Bible-oriented religion and cardamom production and sales over the last few decades, for example, there is no reason to assume that some unequivocal process of modernization in the sense of the trading in of pre-modern elements for originally or contemporary modern aspects is taking place among the Q'eqchi'es. Consequently, I would dispose modernization of any evolutionist perspective and characterize it as a set of issues, problems, dilemmas and paradoxes that deal with the relations between pre-modern, originally modern and contemporary modern elements and which set the agenda of processes of social change and reproduction. Not all these issues and

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[3]. See also Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983; Roosens 1989.
[4]. Wilson 1995: 296.

problems, many of which were discussed in the first chapter, need to be present in the life of every social actor. However the literature on pre-modernity and modernity, in which I have incorporated the issues raised by globalization and post-modernist authors, does circumscribe and underline basic problems and dilemmas of actors on a periphery, such as the Q'eqchi'es. Their world is not characterized by free-floating and contingent processes which can go in any direction. Modernization sets the agenda of these processes and the Q'eqchi'es adopt a creolizing method of dealing with the points raised in this agenda. Modernization and creolization are the two key concepts that make their life-world, meaning-making and practices understandable.

9.3 Creolization and discourse

The creolizing means which the Q'eqchi'es use to deal with modernization are intimately linked to the character of their discourses and to the ways in which their minds process data and impulses that reach them from the surrounding world.[5] Data processing and discourse construction in relation to creolization are the subjects of this section.

Q'eqchi' meaning-making as an act of association

In order to deepen our understanding of processes of creolization among the Q'eqchi'es, a short side-step into cognitive anthropology may prove to be fruitful. The current theory of cognition called "connectionism" holds that the human mind basically works along various networks of association.[6] Every impulse, such as an observation or a thought, simultaneously activates various meanings and emotions which in turn activate other emotions and meanings thereby following complicated and extensive networks of association. Our mind principally works through the parallel processing of information activating multiple networks of association of meanings and emotions rather than obeying fixed propositions, explicit rules or sentences. These connections between meanings and emotions are inculcated or learned by way of experiences and explicit learning. The more these connections are confirmed, the stronger the associations become and the more directive these associations are for processing future information or impulses.[7] Needless to

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[5]. See also Laughlin, Brady 1978.

[6]. I draw especially on an excellent article by Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinn (Strauss, Quinn 1994). See also Bruner 1990; Sperber, Wilson 1986; and Bouwhuijsen 1996.

[7]. There is an obvious parallel with Bourdieu's concept of habitus (see Chapter One) pointing to the inculcation of experiences in the context of social structure and producing dispositions which guide further action. Nevertheless, connectionism differs from Bourdieu in various respects. It not only talks about practices, dispositions and knowledge, but also about emotions, desires and intentions. Next, connectionism

say the various emotions and ideas that are activated in a parallel way may lead to contradictory feelings, ideas and actions.

The results of association may be expressed in discourse and some actors may be interested in structuring this discourse in a rational way. Rationalization in this respect[8] means making the discourse as coherent and consistent as possible, freeing it from emotional appeals and decontextualizing its meanings thereby claiming a universal validity. Actors may claim absolute or decontextualized validity of this rationalized discourse and thus try to force everyone to process relevant data in a serial rather than parallel way. In this way associations become singular and proceed in a unilinear and consistent manner erasing possible contradictions and separating meanings from emotions. Whatever the context or situation, an impulse that is considered to be relevant activates a rational sequence of meanings, of prescribed thinking, which cuts off other kinds of associations.

In bringing this short outline of connectionism to bear on my material concerning the Q'eqchi'es, several relevant issues come to my mind. To begin with, the ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with their religion and economy express a strongly associative character and very little rationality as defined above. To be sure, almost all my respondents were able to indicate specific religious and economic meanings when I asked them about particular religious or economic practices. Both customary and Bible-oriented practices and the various elements of the Q'eqchi'es' economic strategies have an explicit dimension next to an implicit one. In addition, there is some level of rationalization involved in the fact that in the four villages I studied in detail the villagers tried to adapt the meanings of the dominated religious principle to the dominant one. Moreover, Q'eqchi'es tell stories which bring together various customary meanings. I have not focused on these stories in a systematic way, but several respondents told me such stories.

However, these stories have strong mythical features. They cannot be classified as rational in the sense discussed above. I looked in vain for respondents who were able to interrelate the various customary meanings in a coherent and encompassing account. They always talked about meanings in a contextualized way, now and then showing emotional aspects, without the desire or ability to relate all these meanings in consistent narratives. They directly associated meanings and emotions to specific occasions and contexts. For example, in the context of maize planting they consider land to be a "person" whereas in land transactions they conceive of the same land as a commodity.

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emphasizes the often ambiguous nature of past experiences and their processing which leads to contradictory meanings and emotions. Finally, it emphasizes the possibility of actors making a 'deliberate cognitive effort' to create new associations and partially transcend existing networks of association (Strauss, Quinn 1994: 294-295).

[8]. This rationality should not be confused with Weber's formal and substantive rationality (see Chapter One).

The associative character of the Q'eqchi'es' discourse also becomes apparent when local leaders speak in public. Examples of this were pasawink invoking all that dwell in the universe at a yo'lek or a member of the local development committee talking about land title issues. In these talks meanings become interrelated to some extent and sequences of meanings were brought up, but not in such a way that we could speak about a rational discourse. The speakers usually called on existing meanings, ideas and emotions they considered to be important and relevant in a rather loose way without fitting them into a consistent sequence of rational argumentation. Statements and expressions were made in very short sentences and even loose words and names without indicating in what way any expression was related to the previous one.

The same holds true for those who take the floor in a "general assembly" meeting. These communal association meetings go on for hours. Everyone raises his or her ideas and feelings and finally someone stands up to propose a decision without bringing together all the opinions and statements in such a way that the proposal would be a rational conclusion. A proposal becomes a decision the moment someone is able to sense the direction the consensus points to. If his or her intuition is wrong the meeting just goes on.

Another good example of the associative nature of the Q'eqchi'es' discourses is presented by the explanations Q'eqchi'es in several villages gave me referring to the problem of ecological degradation. Depending on the moment and context these Q'eqchi'es, including pasawink, attributed the decreasing fertility of their lands to aj Kastii interventions, to their failure to stick to the contract with the Tzuultaq'a, to increasing population pressure and to the unequal distribution of land in the region. Drawing their attention to the fact that they were now giving a different explanation to the one they mentioned previously, they always replied with the well-known *'Chi junil'*, 'It is all the same'. Q'eqchi'es do not oppose the different kinds of explanations. In their eyes one explanation does not rule out another and they show very little interest in contradictions between these explanations.[9]

Similar accumulations of explanations were expressed by my respondents concerning the explanations of illness. Even customary healers such as the aj ilonel and aj tuul told me that there was no problem combining the chemical medicine provided by the official health services with their own customary treatments. Some of them told me that it is all right to take chemical medicines, but only they were able to deal with the causes of illness. Such causes range from disturbed relations with the

[9]. In this respect Wilson misses the point when he opposes a supposedly Western analysis in terms of unequal access to the land and extension of agro-export economy on the one hand and the view of pasawink on the other hand pointing to the breakdown of relations between the Q'eqchi'es and the conscious environment (Wilson 1995: 290-291).

Tzuultaq'a to an offense against the characteristics and requirements of dealing with specific plants or the house.

The fact that emotions and meanings are often mixed in their discourse is clearly expressed in the way they talk about the rituals they have to perform towards the Tzuultaq'a. I could not escape the impression that the awe-struck expression in their eyes and voices on these occasions was intimately related to the fact that these rituals serve their objective of "resolving" their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in an unpredictable natural setting (see Chapter Four).

On the other hand, rationalized discourses reach the Q'eqchi'es through flows of meaning stemming from the global context. In Chapter Three and Chapter Five the influence of the clergy in particular was emphasized. Theologians all over the world whose rationalized work is confirmed by and radiates from religious centres and institutions in Rome, Geneva or the United States claim religious authority vis-à-vis the Q'eqchi'es. Scientists who develop technology not only want to receive recognition of their work from fellow scientists, they are usually very pleased when their knowledge is applied in far-away corners of the world and institutional networks are involved in getting their technology there.

However, global flows of meaning do not reach the Q'eqchi'es directly, they are transmitted to them by the intermediaries mentioned above. These intermediaries - priests, religious congregations, bishoprics, local churches, ministers, aj Kastii staffed development agencies - not only "filter" these meanings through their own cultural frameworks and explicit policies, they also partially adapt their discourses to local circumstances. In this respect ICTA provides DIGESA and DIGESEPE with applied technology, the clergy working along the lines of liberating pastoral work "inculturate" the Gospel into local cultures thereby accepting some level of synthesis, and the Salesians and ministers at least make the effort to learn the local language.

Moreover, these intermediaries have to work through extended structures of local leaders such as catechists, evangelical leaders and representantes agrícolas. Their success in working with these local leaders depends on whether meanings can be contextualized and related to specific occasions such as the next celebration of the Word or service, the preparation of young couples for married life, or how to take care of coffee plants and pigs. Either these intermediaries have little success in this respect - the example of hybrid seeds was discussed in Chapter Seven - or the contextualization of meanings in the training of local leaders requires that the meanings are "lifted out" of the rationality of these churches and intervening agencies' discourses. The transfer of meanings from intervening agencies to the Q'eqchi'es is clearly fragmented and selective. It takes place in such a way that isolated skills, practices and meanings are transferred to

the Q'eqchi'es in isolated training and education meetings without their interconnecting rationality becoming obvious to the Q'eqchi'es.[10]

The loss of a considerable part of the rationalizing character of official discourses is complemented by the selective ways in which the Q'eqchi'es adopt and adapt elements from these official discourses. Both sides of the interfaces between intervening agencies and Q'eqchi'es are marked by selectivity: the former concerning the meanings that they promote, the latter concerning the meanings that they adopt. This loss of interconnecting rationality means that these elements are liable to become reworked, redefined and adapted to local needs by the Q'eqchi'es themselves.

An example of this reworking and selection was presented in Chapter Four: the predominantly practical reasons that lay behind the conversion of Q'eqchi'es to an evangelical church and the decision to become a catechist. They feel attracted to specific meanings, such as the emphasis on moral behaviour and the value of prayer healing by churches, that support and legitimate their decision to make a break or rupture and to reorganize their lives. They appreciate these specific elements without committing themselves to embracing the whole official discourse with all its rational consequences for the performance of customary practices or the association of basic customary meanings to specific moments of the agrarian cycle. Another example is presented by the fact that only some Q'eqchi'es adopt chemical fertilizers when they need to do so to maintain their subsistence production (see Rubelpec) whereas the state's main objective in promoting fertilizers is to increase cash-crop production.

In short, the Q'eqchi'es select the elements they can use and like and thereby isolate these elements from the rational framework of the official discourse. In addition, the broker character of local leaders through which intervening agencies have to work means that reworking and selective adoption and adaption of external meanings are legitimized. Global flows of meanings may have an asymmetrical character and the discourses "flowing" in this way may have rational features, but their multi-staged character involving various interfaces at various levels means that before these discourses reach the "ordinary" Q'eqchi'es they have lost a considerable part of their rationalizing character.

The associative rather than rational character of the ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with their religion and economy should not be confused with any notion of irrational thinking or acting or not making sense. For example, in the case of customary religion it was made clear that it makes sense given the Q'eqchi'es' relations of dependency with their natural environment. Based on the assumption - which as such cannot be controlled

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[10]. Perhaps the most notable exception are those boys who receive their education in the boarding schools run by the Salesian priests. Isolated from their local communities they are continuously confronted with and influenced by the rationalizing discourse of these sacramentalist priests, both in its social and religious aspects.

- that the landscape has a personal nature, customary meanings and practices make perfect sense. The same holds true for the Q'eqchi'es' reluctance to become permanently dependent on aj Kastii for modern technology. In line with Strauss and Quinn[11] it may be said that the act of learning, constructing logic or making sense involves the strengthening of connections between meanings in associative networks of data processing, which certainly does not need to proceed in a serial or rational manner.

This making sense on the part of the Q'eqchi'es and their construction of religious and economic meanings, are very much encouraged by the fact that in each community there is a minimum level of religious and economic pluralism. Even in the communities of Samox and Xalihá, where there are hardly any evangelicals and where the Catholic church promotes the integration of customary leaders and catechists, the villagers are confronted with evangelical churches in nearby communities to which they feel the need to respond. Despite the cooperation between customary leaders and catechists in these communities the villagers are aware of the different origins of customary and Bible-oriented practices. As regards their economic practices and meanings the Q'eqchi'es face a pluralism of practices and ideas stemming from their own endogenous knowledge on the one hand and a variety of intervening agencies on the other.

As a result, both Bible-oriented and customary practices and existing economic practices are not just non-expansive, self-regulating rituals and practices linked to a rather implicit "common sense" which tends to reinforce long-term stability.[12] Religious and economic pluralism rather prompt the Q'eqchi'es to reflect both upon practices and meanings offered to them by intervening agencies, and upon their endogenous or customary practices and meanings. They take practices and meanings out of the realm of the taken-for-granted and are encouraged not only to deal with the roles of religion and economy in their lives in a more explicit way, they are also put in a position where they can choose the role that best suits their purposes.[13]

In short, religious and economic pluralism stimulates a rather expansive kind of religion and economy among the Q'eqchi'es. This expansiveness may not be rational, but it is clearly reflexive. It impels the Q'eqchi'es to reflect on their practices and meanings, to expand and rework their associative networks, to selectively adopt and adapt knowledge and meanings stemming from global flows and to articulate them with practices and meanings stemming from their own customs and tradition. They are active meaning-making actors in a globalizing world.

This reflexivity needs some qualifications. Giddens writes about a general reflexivity as a characteristic of all human action, which he calls 'the reflexive monitoring of action'. He also identifies two specific forms of

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[11]. Strauss, Quinn 1994: 286-287.
[12]. See Hannerz 1992: 127-133, 137.
[13]. Referring to religion see Rostas, Droogers 1993: 10.

reflexivity: a traditional and a modern one. In traditional reflexivity actions are mainly examined in the light of tradition, while in modern reflexivity these actions are reflected upon in the light of incoming knowledge, linked to the trust in professional expertise.[14] From the perspective of his definitions reflexivity among the Q'eqchi'es has both pre-modern and modern dimensions because they reflect on their practices in the light of both their customary or traditional meanings and incoming knowledge. They use meanings from both sources to reflect on their actions.

Association and creolization

The associative ways in which the Q'eqchi'es deal with their economy and religion have important consequences for their creolizing efforts. As was outlined above the act of creolization involves the articulation of the endogenous and the exogenous, the pre-modern and the modern, and thus the articulation of continuity and change.

To begin with, in line with Strauss' and Quinn's discussion of connectionism[15] one would expect that the parallel manner of processing data resulting in multiple associative networks would enable the Q'eqchi'es to guarantee an important degree of continuity. These contextualized networks, *i.e.* adapted to specific occasions and circumstances, tend to be self-reinforcing. This is because the more impulses there are that lead to the activation of these networks with more or less satisfying results the stronger the connections making up the network become. For example, when the performance of an extensive set of rituals at the time of maize planting is followed by an abundant harvest the Q'eqchi'es will be inclined to believe more strongly in the logic of customary religion and to repeat the same rituals next year. This reinforcement is especially strong when not only meanings are activated, but also emotions are aroused such as the feeling of relief for a good harvest despite the disasters the surrounding nature might have inflicted on their crops.

In addition, the processing of impulses through these networks may easily lead to the performance of practices and the construction of meanings that avoid disconfirming evidence or information arising. For example, if the maize fails to grow well despite having performed their customary rituals the Q'eqchi'es may feel that they have not performed their rituals with enough dedication or in a sincere enough way rather than considering customary rituals to be superfluous. Several pasawink I spoke to were particularly ready to bring up this argument.

Moreover, associative networks come about not only in daily or practical experience, but also through deliberate teaching in combination with powerful incentives and disincentives. In Chapter Two the limited

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[14]. See Chapter One and Giddens 1990: 36*ff.*
[15]. See Strauss, Quinn 1994: 289-292.

effects of official and private education among the Q'eqchi'es were discussed, but processes of education and training also take place between parents and children and in some places between pasawink and other members of the community.

Finally, networks of association of meanings and emotions are not created in social isolation and the experience of sharing part of the activated meanings and aroused emotions with others further confirms these networks. In the case of both economic and religious practices the pre-modern or customary ones have particularly strong communitarian features among the Q'eqchi'es and require a high degree of sharing. The moment this communitarian or shared character cannot be guaranteed, customary practices such as the mayejak and the patron saint's feast become problematic (see Rubelpec and Chaabilchoch). By contrast, when these rituals are performed in a communitarian and satisfactory way their shared character reinforces the Q'eqchi'es' positive attitude towards them and their related meanings and emotions.

Of course, the durability of existing networks of association is stronger among elderly people than among younger ones. The latter have a more open attitude towards the new, the exogenous, the modern and change in general, whereas the former are more cautious and suspicious in this respect. A similar differentiation can be made between "ordinary" community members and local brokers. The same holds true of communities further away from or closer to urban centres (see Xalihá and Rubelpec) and, although I have not focused much on these differences, I have the impression that women are more cautious in this respect than men. Nevertheless, these associative networks guarantee some level of continuity in the case of all the Q'eqchi'es I studied. Strauss and Quinn stress that these networks of association can be overlain with other, stronger, patterns of connections, but they do not completely disappear.[16]

This associative way of dealing with economy and religion not only guarantees a basic level of continuity, it also embodies an important degree of flexibility. Unlike Bourdieu who writes about rather fixed and commanding dispositions leading to practices which are more or less executions of the directives of these dispositions, Strauss and Quinn emphasize the loose character of these networks which enables the actors to react in a flexible way to the particulars of any given event. The combined influence of different meanings and emotions activated by the particular features of any given situation can lead to rather different outcomes from one situation to the next.[17]

My appearance as a researcher - exogenous, unknown, new, moderately modern - presents a nice example of multiple perspectives from which to approach something or someone new. In several villages existing

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[16]. Strauss, Quinn 1994: 189.
[17]. Strauss, Quinn 1994: 285, 287.

networks of association and interpretation were clearly inadequate to provide the Q'eqchi'es with a satisfying answer as to what to think of me and how to react. I was foreign to them, so belonged to those outside of the social units they identify with, but was I to be conceived of in a similar way as aj Kastii? I talked to them about projects and development, but did not belong to those rare species of development workers that visit them on exceptional occasions. I was sent by the bishop to do my job in their village, as my letter with a nice stamp suggested, but then again, I was not a priest, so what was I? I was doing research that might benefit the policies of the department of social pastoral work of the bishopric and improve its services towards Q'eqchi' communities, but what was their own community going to gain from my work? I was to write a book about them, but what is the use of books anyway and who might read this book? In all the villages I worked in the Q'eqchi'es had these and similar doubts concerning my work the first few times I came to their community. I do not know what the various reasons were that finally convinced almost all of the villagers to cooperate and to place their trust in me, but the introduction by the priest turned out to be crucial and the fact that my work could be interpreted as proof that the bishop was taking an interest in how they live, how they work, and what their problems are surely helped a lot.

As this example shows, different outcomes are possible based on different perspectives to approaching the new and unknown from the point of view of various networks of association. The actor can build upon these multiple perspectives to construct new meanings and arouse new emotions when faced with new situations, events and experiences, *i.e.* make deliberate cognitive efforts to respond to the new and unknown. Existing associative networks of contextualized meanings and emotions may not be directly relevant to the new and unknown, but their flexible nature and embodiment of multiple perspectives allow the actor some room for manoeuvre in extending existing networks, reworking meanings and impulses, and reflecting creatively upon what to think, to feel and to do in the face of the new and unknown. Flexible association on the basis of multiple perspectives or approaches enables the actor to find a balance between continuity and change. Here we touch on the heart of what creolization is all about.

The alternative, rational or serial processing of impulses and data, leaves the actors much more limited room to respond to the new and unknown in a creolizing way. A rational discourse not only requires the separation of meanings and emotions, its decontextualized nature causes contradictions between individual meanings to become visible and requires the actor to eliminate these contradictions. It demands unequivocal meanings and unilinear associations resulting in singular perspectives from which to approach new and unknown phenomena and situations. When decontextualized rational discourses are contextualized by specific actors in specific situations, they force a single logic upon the actor's meaning-making and practices. Consequently, faced with new phenomena and situations

rational discourses tend to seriously curb the actor's flexibility and creativity in responding and adapting. They tend to force actors to make a choice between the one and the other, between continuity and change, between the known and the unknown, between the pre-modern and the modern. Creolization and articulation become very difficult when the actors involved try to impose a rational, that is, universally valid and absolute discourse upon others.

For example, if the Q'eqchi'es were to adopt and contextualize the rational discourse of the Salesians on endogenous rituals which claim that these rituals are contradictory to the Gospel - this claim is rational in the sense of being decontextualized, unequivocal and free from any emotional connotation - a creolizing effort in terms of combining continuity and change would become impossible. It would obstruct any positive evaluation of their own reinvented tradition and any articulation of this tradition with new religious practices and meanings.

In short, the point I want to make here is that two stimulating factors play an important role in enabling the Q'eqchi'es to articulate the endogenous and the exogenous, the known and the new, the pre-modern and the modern in an expansive and reflexive context. The first factor is the predominantly associative nature of data processing among the Q'eqchi'es. The second is the selective transmission of meanings from intervening agencies to the Q'eqchi'es, in the process of which these meanings become "lifted out" of the rationality of the agencies' discourses.

9.4 Creolization and social relations

The rather associative character of data processing and discourse among the Q'eqchi'es and the limited rationalizing impact of intervening agencies are not the only factors that influence the creolizing capacity of the Q'eqchi'es. This capacity has also to be understood in terms of identities, strategies and social relations.

Göran Therborn's approach to globalization and modernity may provide a suitable starting point for discussing creolization from this social perspective. After criticising the idea of modernity as a single set of processes with one Great Unifier he writes about various trajectories through a terrain of modernity. He distinguishes several passes of entry into modernity which guide various trajectories. The point he is making is that the location, internal or external, of the forces for and against modernity has important consequences for subsequent social structuration and cultural developments. The endogenous or exogenous positioning of those who

advance and those who resist modernity has important consequences for the way in which modernity comes about and what form it will adopt.[18]

In his 'European gate of revolution or reform' the forces promoting and those rejecting modernity are both endogenous. In the entry called 'imposed or externally induced modernization' the modernizing impulse comes from outside. Those countries that manage to import modern influences selectively in order to link continuity to change have the best chance of successfully responding to the external threat. Therborn cites the Japanese example in this respect. Another entry is labelled 'conquest, subjection and appropriation' and represents most of the cases of colonial subjection in Africa and Asia. In these cases external modern powers defeat pre-modern internal forces, pre-modernity becomes discredited and modernity is imposed. In this context it is very difficult to link change to continuity. Actors have to face the dilemma of modernity being associated with the external ruling powers while pre-modernity is linked to defeated structures.[19]

Reflecting upon Therborn's passes of entry with the Q'eqchi'es in mind I would say that the European entry is not very relevant because in the case of the Q'eqchi'es modern elements were initially introduced from outside. By contrast, the other two entries do make an important and relevant point. Without accepting the possible connotation that entry into modernity must include trading in pre-modern elements for modern ones, I believe that a creolizing method of dealing with external or modern influences has the best chance when the social actors concerned are able to maintain some level of autonomy in decision-making. Such autonomy enables them to adopt and adapt modern or external elements selectively for their own benefit. When their decision-making capacity and relative autonomy are completely lost in the face of external or modern forces, existing or pre-modern elements may find it very difficult to survive while modern elements may adopt an imposed or "alien" character. Rupture dominates the experiences of the actors concerned and they will be unable to articulate this change with any level of continuity. These actors may end up in a vacuum between pre-modern structures and cultures on the one hand and modernity on the other: the former are destroyed without being replaced by the latter.

Exogenous and endogenous: identities

As a first step towards further applying these considerations to the case of the Q'eqchi'es I will have to specify which forces are exogenous and which are endogenous, who in the eyes of the Q'eqchi'es belong to "us" and who are "them" and what do "us" and "them" stand for. In preceding chapters

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[18]. Therborn 1995: 134.
[19]. Therborn 1995: 131-135.

several aspects of the Q'eqchi'es' identity constructions were discussed, in the following pages these aspects will be brought together in a more comprehensive treatment.

In my view this treatment of identity must transcend the various divisions and one-sided positions that have marked the literature on identity constructions in Guatemala, especially the identities of its Indian population. Anthropologists have attempted to define Guatemala's Indian groups either in terms of certain cultural traits - dress, language, religion - or in terms of their relations with other groups. Some authors following the former or substantive approach have looked for those cultural characteristics that could be considered typical of a specific ethnic group. Others, in line with Fredrik Barth[20], have adopted a relational approach stressing that identities are not primarily constructed on the basis of specific cultural features, but through stressing differences with other groups in which the cultural traits themselves may vary.[21] In my view a comprehensive approach would have to pay attention to both the substantive and relational aspects of identity.

Another shortcoming of the relevant literature is represented by the divorce of two circuits of discussion on Indian cultures and identities. On the one hand much is said about these constructions from an outsider's points of view while relatively little attention is paid to how the relevant actors themselves conceive of their identity. These interpretations of Indian cultures and identities include both those who see them as an expression of "super-exploitation" from colonial times onwards and those who stress the continuity from the pre-Columbian past, portraying Indian identities as autochthonous cultures of resistance against internal and external colonialism up to the present day.[22] All these essentialist interpretations, mainly among Guatemalan aj Kastii academics, have in common that they largely neglect what the Indians themselves have to say about their identities. On the other hand there are studies, mainly by foreign scholars, which do take into account the expressions of their respondents on these matters, but do not play any role in relevant Guatemalan debates.[23] A more comprehensive approach would have to take into account both characteristics that can be observed from an outsider's point of view - cultural features that the actors have in common - and the statements and expressions of the respondents themselves about their identities.

In studying the construction of identity among the Q'eqchi'es, I became aware of several important facts. First, as already noted, several of the units with which they identify have both a social and a spatial dimension. For example, the household, the community and the Q'eqchi'es

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[20]. Barth 1969.

[21]. For an overview of the relevant literature see Smith 1990b: 26*ff*.

[22]. For the super-exploitation thesis see for example Martínez Peláez 1971; for the culture of resistance interpretation see for instance Guzmán Böckler, Herbert 1970.

[23]. A good example is presented by Warren 1978 and Watanabe 1992.

as a social unit refer to both the persons who make up this unit and the space that is linked to these persons (houses, land, forests, Q'eqchi' region). Secondly, identity construction is a context-specific and layered phenomenon. For example, the Q'eqchi'es identify with their household, their local community, their church and those who speak Q'eqchi'. Each of these identities is relevant in a specific context. Within the local community the fact that they belong to a household or specific church community is important and relevant. When they go to the market in the central town of the municipality, the local community of origin is the crucial issue. When they meet an aj Kastii, it is the fact that they belong to the world of Q'eqchi' speakers which matters. As a result, in line with what has just been said about the contextuality of meanings and the associative nature of data processing and discourse of the Q'eqchi'es, the context-bound character of their identity constructions has to be underlined.

However, I do not want to suggest that all these identifications have no interconnections at all or that every identification is of equal importance to them, seen from the perspective of their daily activities. Some identifications are more important to them than others because the former identifications are linked to activities and occasions that are more important to them than other practices and contexts. In this way, the various identifications can be ranked in a hierarchy of importance. In an effort to combine the various elements in a comprehensive approach to identity constructions, the respondents must first be asked which units they identify with. Next, they should be asked what they think of those who do not belong to these units and how they deal with them. Finally, the question of which practices and meanings they share with those found within these units and which distinguish them from outsiders, must be raised.

On the basis of the material collected through these three steps, the household and the local (church) community came to the fore as the primary units which my respondents identified with. Not only did they mention these units when answering my questions, but it was also shown in the preceding chapters that the household and the local (church) community are also the two principal units which bring the Q'eqchi'es together to perform almost all religious and economic practices with their related meanings. The Tzuultaq'a, God, the Bible, their maize and their land are all central elements that express constitutive meanings of their identities. These practices and meanings clearly differentiate them, for example, from the aj Kastii in the region.

My respondents also indicated the Q'eqchi'es as a group and the larger church community they belong to as units of identification. They certainly have a great deal in common with the Q'eqchi'es as a group. It is not only the typical dress of female Q'eqchi'es and their common language that are important in this respect. In the preceding chapters I have argued that the material I collected in various parts of the region and in various villages point to the conclusion that the Q'eqchi'es share very specific

religious practices and meanings as well as basic elements of economic strategies which differentiate them from others. My respondents also expressed the view that they feel in touch with the wider church community and that they mention representatives of their church in their prayers.

However in their identity constructions, these two units are very much subordinated to the first two units. The Q'eqchi'es have no organizations of their own at the supra-local or inter-local level, and any Q'eqchi' from another community who enters a local community has to face the same challenge as an aj Kastii before being able to work with this community, that is to gain the confidence of the Q'eqchi'es of the community he or she is visiting. Relations with the local landscape - household and local community - are clearly more important than those with the Q'eqchi' region as a whole. The local landscape either plays a central role in their prayers or, when a special relationship with this landscape has (not yet) been established because the 'mountain is new' in settlement areas, it is related to the central thirteen mountains by way of mayejak pilgrimages to some of them. In any case, these pilgrimages constitute the exception to the rule that customary practices are performed either by the household or by the local community. Moreover, hardly any economic practice is performed by more than one community or by members of various communities together. In short, there is a considerable level of cultural sharing[24] among the Q'eqchi'es as a group, but the conclusion that the Q'eqchi'es may be characterized as an ethnic group, which assumes that their identification with the Q'eqchi'es as such plays a dominant role in the construction of their identity, remains unfounded.

Of course, Bible-oriented religion stresses the importance of the community of all those who believe in God which transcends the borders of the local community. The training courses of catechists and local evangelical leaders as well as of adult education and health care promoters of the Catholic church, emphasize the importance of the wider church community. Nonetheless, economic projects that link several local communities are rare as almost all Bible-oriented practices are performed at the household and local community levels, and Bible-oriented religion emphasizes individual responsibility. In their prayers, the Q'eqchi'es hardly talk about the wider church community as such; they mention individual persons such as the priest, the bishop, the pope, the minister or the missionary. In brief, the development of any sort of "imagined community"[25], either an ethnic group, a wider church community or least of all one based on national identity, among most of the Q'eqchi'es is quite limited. Only among some brokers, especially those who live in an urban context, is the idea that they belong to a Q'eqchi' or even Maya ethnic group very much alive.

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[24]. For the concepts of "cultural sharing" and "cultural non-sharing" see Hannerz 1992.
[25]. Anderson 1978.

Various units of identification point to various categories of outsiders, but the aj Kastii represent the most important of these categories. They are outsiders in relation to all four units of identification except for the church community. In towns, aj Kastii and Q'eqchi'es may go to the same service or Mass and the wider church community certainly includes aj Kastii, but in the eyes of the Q'eqchi'es they play a rather marginal role in their church. After they have been accepted by the local community, aj Kastii priests or ministers are perceived primarily as priests or ministers instead of as aj Kastii. Consequently, relations with the aj Kastii constitute the primary relational aspect of the identity constructions of the Q'eqchi'es.

The Q'eqchi'es deal with the aj Kastii and perceive them in a variety of ways. In Chapter Two and Chapter Seven, we showed that the opinions of the respondents ranged from 'they are believers in the same God' to 'they may kill us'. These differences are apparent within each community and between communities. The scale from distrust to trust goes from Xalihá, to Samox, to Chaabilchoch and to Rubelpec. The willingness to adopt external inputs in production is closely related to the level of trust or distrust towards aj Kastii. The factors that influence this level of trust or distrust are access to education and the pastoral policy followed by the parish or local evangelical church. The former adds to the self-confidence of the Q'eqchi'es vis-à-vis the aj Kastii and the reinforcement of Bible-oriented religion encourages the Q'eqchi'es to conceive of aj Kastii as 'believers in God'.

The "closed corporate community"

In any case, the landlords, finca administrators, merchants, army officers and state officials stand out among the aj Kastii who are most feared. As the discussion of the role of fincas and merchants and of the cruelty of the army in particular have made clear, the Q'eqchi'es have all the reasons in the world to fear these categories of aj Kastii. Since colonial times, their social and cultural survival has depended on their determination and capacity to retain the economic, social, political and cultural autonomy of their local community in the face of incursions on the part of the state and other intervening agencies and actors. The state in particular has repeatedly tried to pull them into an urban and national context. The colonial reducciones, the INTA policy of concentrating their lotes in village centres and the counter-insurgency efforts of the army in creating model villages, have more in common than state spokesmen would be willing to admit.

Moreover, the army policy of concentrating as many people as possible in ethnically mixed communities is considered by several of my respondents as an attempt to destroy identification with local or ethnic categories and to create some sort of national identity. The same can be said of the army's efforts to exercise ideological influence on the survivors of violence and on the young men who have to serve two years as conscripts. In addition, the contents of the material used in many of the educational

programmes betray a similar intention which is one of the major reasons for the failure of many of these programmes. These materials reflect government ideas about national identity and hardly coincide with what the Q'eqchi'es want to learn.

There is little doubt that these efforts of the state contradict the cultural identity of the Q'eqchi'es. In the ways they "map" their life-worlds, there is no such thing as a national cultural identity, waiting out there, which they could identify with. To them, state agencies represent everything but an attractive national identity. These agencies have to be treated with a great deal of caution because their intentions rarely coincide with specific Q'eqchi' strategies to deal with such questions as material survival. For example, not only is the state unable to enforce its laws in the Q'eqchi' region, in cases of land conflicts it appears to the Q'eqchi'es as a major accomplice in illegal violence. Q'eqchi'es do not just reject any urban or national influence, but it seems that at least most of them consider it wise to retain their communal autonomy.

Are we dealing, then, with another version of the "closed corporate community" which Eric Wolf wrote about? He claimed that as a reaction to the expansion of large estates encroaching upon Indian lands and labour from the Seventeenth century onwards, Indian communities in Mesoamerica adopted a closed and corporate character. This defensive character was designed to ensure communal jurisdiction over land, a restricted membership, the maintenance of a religious system and mechanisms for the redistribution or destruction of surplus wealth generated by members of the community; moreover it would uphold barriers against the entry of goods and ideas produced outside of the community.[26]

I agree with Carol Smith when she confirms the corporate character of local Indian communities. Indians identify primarily with their local community and they basically want to retain the relative autonomy of their community vis-à-vis the state with which they maintain very problematic relations. However, the determination to retain local autonomy is not linked to keeping the community closed, but to the wish to selectively engage in external relations, communications and exchange. Moreover, Wolf's concept tends to reify colonial institutions within the local community without giving due consideration to the transformation of these institutions through history.[27]

Chapter Two has made clear that in the case of the Q'eqchi'es, there have been important institutional transformations since the Seventeenth century and up to the present day. Their attitude towards external influences has probably always been one of selective openness. Originally, many of the religious practices and meanings that are now classified as costumbres, and many customary institutions, have an external origin. The

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[26]. Wolf 1957, see also Smith 1990b: 19-20.
[27]. Smith 1990b: 3, 13, 17-21.

saints, the patron saint's feast and the chinames and cofradías are clear examples of phenomena that had an external origin but were selectively adopted and adapted in the past to constitute basic elements of their endogenous sources of meaning-making today. Creolization among the Q'eqchi'es has probably been of all times.

In a later article Wolf made several qualifications to his concept. He emphasized the fact that we need to pay attention to internal divisions, that the boundaries between Indians and non-Indians are contested and not static and that many closed corporate communities have disappeared in the Nineteenth century. He wrote that his basic aim was to criticise interpretations which draw a direct line from the pre-Columbian past to the Indian present and to call attention to historical factors influencing Indian communities.[28]

Nevertheless, by claiming a basic continuity from the Seventeenth century onwards, Wolf comes very close to the essentialist interpretations, outlined above, which tend to pin-point Indian cultures or identities in one specific period or to reduce them to one specific constitutive quality. I would say that the Q'eqchi'es are not just the autochthonous champions of resistance[29], that their customary culture is not just the internalization of exploitation and oppression[30], and they are not just threatened by "ladinoization" as many present-day advocates of the Indian cause fear. They are not romantic fighters against modernity nor can they find relief only by wholeheartedly taking over modernity. Q'eqchi'es are not just victims or standard bearers of authenticity: they have their limited but real room for manoeuvre and are not worried about whether the things they do are authentic or not. All these essentialist interpretations conceptualize Indian cultures either as something essentially desirable and authentic or as reflections of backward social structures. In both cases, Q'eqchi' cultures appear as essentially static phenomena which are either threatened to disappear or need to be transformed in a radical way. The creolizing capacity of the Q'eqchi'es, articulating modern and pre-modern aspects, endogenous and exogenous elements, emphasizes the dynamic character of their cultures and identities and thus refutes any such static and essentialist simplification.

Social conditions of creolization

Instead of adopting a defensive and closed attitude towards the outside world, the local Q'eqchi' communities - indeed the Q'eqchi' households for that matter - are creolizing actors. Even more, in line with my earlier reflections on Therborn, I would argue that the creolizing capacity of the

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[28]. Wolf 1986.
[29]. As Guzmán Böckler and Herbert claim (Guzmán Böckler, Herbert 1970).
[30]. As Cabarrús claims (Cabarrús 1979: 60, 73-76, 109).

Q'eqchi'es depends on the maintenance of the relative autonomy of the local community and the household. The disappearance of this relative autonomy of decision-making and the disintegration of the local community and the household would, first of all, disrupt the continuity of most of the existing economic and religious practices since these two units bring together the Q'eqchi'es to perform almost all of these practices. Secondly, any creolizing effort would become impossible because these units constitute the social conditions within which the processes of meaning-making and decision-making about external and modern influences take place. Consequently, not only is there a basic level of continuity which depends on the relative autonomy of the local community and the household, but the same holds true with regard to the capacity of the Q'eqchi'es to articulate this continuity with a selective level of change.

What may happen when this basic condition of creolization becomes seriously threatened is demonstrated by those Q'eqchi'es who were the victims of army violence. Most of those who have been lucky enough to survive have either left their local community for good - refugees who went to Mexico and those who fled to the outskirts of the town of Cobán - or have returned to their places of origin only to find their former community in a state of disruption, division, mutual fear and distrust. In both cases Q'eqchi' community life and communitarian practices among Q'eqchi'es have generally disappeared, leaving the Q'eqchi'es to themselves; in fact many of them have even lost their homes and relatives.

This disappearance of Q'eqchi' community life not only undermines much of their existing identity constructions but also, in particular, the foundation of many pre-modern aspects of their economy and religion. This holds true, for example, of the communitarian aspects of land control, labour and redistribution of resources. Wilson has made clear that among these Q'eqchi'es, communitarian customary practices such as the mayejak and customary institutions such as the chinames face many difficulties to survive; even the Tzuultaq'a has lost much of his or her central role in their universe.[31] The latter not only refers to those who have left their places of origin, but also to those who returned but are unable to address the Tzuultaq'a in a communitarian way.

In a violence-torn rural context, hardly any new or modern economic activities have taken the place of pre-modern ones, and the picture which emerges is that of rather desperate and individualized Q'eqchi'es trying to survive. On the matter of religion, many Q'eqchi'es have turned to an evangelical church[32], but it remains to be seen whether modern religious practices and meanings offered by these churches have a lasting or relevant impact on the discourse and meaning-making of the Q'eqchi'es in these

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[31]. Wilson 1995: 68, 243-247.

[32]. It was shown in Chapter Three that in war-torn areas, about one third of the Q'eqchi' population has turned to one of several evangelical churches.

specific circumstances. In any case, the Catholic church faces serious difficulties when it encourages these violence-torn communities to even perform the celebration of the Word or other Bible-oriented practices.

In short, the experience of war-torn areas confirms the idea that there is a close relation between the loss of relative autonomy, especially by the local community, and its capacity to reproduce continuity and to creolize. These experiences leave the Q'eqchi'es in a kind of no man's land between a collapsing creole mixture of pre-modern and modern aspects on the one hand, and the lack of modern alternatives on the other. It remains to be seen whether war-torn communities will be able to restore or renew some level of autonomy and creolizing capacity in the future.

As the example of army influence and its consequences has shown, the agendas and the power of intervening agencies have an important impact on the relative autonomy and the creolizing capacity of the local community and household. The state still seems to be unable to transcend its age-old tendency to extend its control over Indian communities. As long as it continues to do so, in its present version using elements of the concept of nation-state to legitimize these efforts instead of working out a more contemporary modern model of a multicultural or polyvocal society, it will continue to alienate the Q'eqchi' population from any modernizing project initiated by the state. In common with other intervening actors and agencies, the state seems unable to control the local communities effectively by other than violent means. Except for the violence-torn communities, generally speaking the local communities maintain a circumscribed but real room for manoeuvre to continue their creolization.

These conclusions are valid at a general level, but they do not rule out the possibility that the influence of specific agencies and actors may have particular consequences for this relative autonomy. Sacramentalist pastoral work has a negative impact on the continuation of the so-called "general assembly" and emphasizes the power of the catechists. The reinforcement of the role of male catechists limits the public role of women. Landlords seriously curb the relative autonomy of the local community of mozos colonos in every way. Instead of communicating with local leaders or the local "general assembly", agricultural extension workers often simply select someone to become a representante agrícola and try to work through him. The introduction of several churches within a single local community makes it much more difficult for this community to speak with one voice.

On the other hand, these encroachments on the relative autonomy and decision-making capacity of the local community may be reflections of an already weakened internal structure and sense of cohesion. How far these encroachments and impacts on the internal structures of the local communities will go in the future is hard to predict, until now they have not been successful in undermining the decision-making and creolizing capacity of the local communities in which I have worked in a decisive manner.

Of course, intervening agencies and exogenous influences do not reach all Q'eqchi'es in a similar way and with the same power. Factors that make a difference in this respect include the distance towards the urban centres of Cobán, Carchá and Chamelco, the level of trust or distrust towards aj Kastii and the kind of pastoral policy followed by churches. In particular local leaders who operate as brokers with their many urban contacts are among those who are subject to the greatest exogenous influences. One would expect among them the highest level of adoption of such influences, but it is precisely among urban Q'eqchi' catechists and teachers that one finds the strongest efforts to reinvent tradition, to take their costumbres and history seriously. Among these, the endeavours to produce texts and radio programmes in the Q'eqchi' language, to introduce specific customary practices in standard Catholic rituals and to contact organizations of the indigenous movement in the capital are the strongest. Apparently the stronger the exogenous influences, the more compelling the need to reinvent traditions and to creolize.

Discussions of these issues within and outside the Catholic church indicate that the local community or the household may be the most important, but not the only circles in which creolization can take place. The efforts of the Department of Social Pastoral Work, itself pursuing a creolizing policy in religion and development projects, to create a regional network of local representatives can be seen as an attempt to widen the scope of reflection on relevant issues of creolization. As already discussed, there is a level of shared culture among the Q'eqchi'es which might serve as a basis for encouraging creolizing efforts at the ethnic level. The Q'eqchi'es may be stimulated to organize themselves at the inter-local or supra-local level, creatively responding to ongoing processes of disembedding and making use of new associative opportunities offered by the globalizing context. Among urban brokers in particular, ideas about a multicultural society and a Q'eqchi' "imagined community" criticising the concept of the nation-state are becoming popular. The Q'eqchi'es may hardly exist as an ethnic group but there is no reason to rule out their potential for becoming one.

9.5 Creolization and globalization

Creolization is probably of all times and we have seen that already under colonial rule, the Q'eqchi'es were selectively incorporating external and modern elements and articulating them with pre-modern and endogenous aspects. Except for those who have suffered the consequences of massive violence, they are still able to do so because they have retained a basic level of local autonomy.

However this relative autonomy and creolizing capacity also has to be understood in the light of the pace and intensity of the influences which

external actors and factors exercise on the Q'eqchi'es. This is where globalization comes in. As flows of people, meanings, images, ideas, capital, goods and technology span the globe and reach actors at a periphery such as the Q'eqchi'es, their creolizing capacity is increasingly required as well as placed under strain. Confronted with these widening flows, such actors increasingly have to face up to the necessity of making sense out of new meanings, ideas, people, capital and goods, to relate this sense to their endogenous meanings and practices, and to decide what should be done with the new and unknown. In a globalizing context, creolization becomes ever more important, modifying its character. Implicit or rather non-reflexive ways of dealing with the new and endogenous may become increasingly insufficient to deal with the new and endogenous as the explicit and reflexive dimensions of creolization are emphasized.

In addition, it does not seem far-fetched to suppose that when the pace and intensity of the new and unknown reaching them as a result of global flows become too high, the social conditions and meaning-making dimension of creolization may reach their limits. The decision-making capability within the local community and household and the capacity of association and articulation may have to "surrender" in the face of a massive and overwhelming "invasion" of the new or the modern. I speculate on purpose here and use some imaginative terms because, to my knowledge, no systematic research focusing on these questions and issues in a comparative perspective has yet been done. Operational concepts still need to be worked out in order to determine where the limits of creolization are to be found and what happens in social, cultural and psychological terms after those boundaries have been crossed.[33] Further research on these questions and processes, both descriptive and analytical, seems indispensable in order to deepen our understanding of processes of creolization in a globalizing context.

A comparative study of the creolizing capacity of Q'eqchi'es who have suffered from massive violence and those who have been saved from such violence may be very useful in this respect. As already alluded to by the phrase "no man's land" between a mixture of pre-modern and modern elements on the one hand and a lack of modern elements on the other, those who have suffered show several traits that may be useful in confronting with the creolizing processes of Q'eqchi'es who have been shielded from such experiences.[34] A substantial majority of Q'eqchi'es belong to the latter

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[33]. Are young boys recruited by warlords in Liberia and Somalia and killing each other, or Amazone Indians ending up in Brazilian shanty towns, or the ever increasing number of clochards in European cities cases in point? Is the war on drugs in the end a war on the social, physical and psychological effects of people whose creolizing capacity has disintegrated?

[34]. Wilson's publications may provide useful material in this respect, but as such, his studies are insufficient to base such research on because his perspective did not coincide with globalization, creolization and their limits.

category and the flows of people, meanings, capital, goods have remained within limits that allow the Q'eqchi'es to deal with them.

It has to be stressed that these flows reach the Q'eqchi'es from a polycentric and polyvocal global scene. The religious centres from which they originate can be found in Rome, the headquarters of religious congregations in various European and North American towns, and various places in the United States from which evangelical churches have radiated all over the continent. These religious flows go through various regional centres in Latin America. Other flows connect the Q'eqchi'es with coffee consumers in Europe and the United States, with Arabs who use cardamom in their cuisine, with European and North American donor agencies who channel funds through NGOs, with research centres all over the world working on scientific and technological aspects of agricultural production and with universities in England or the Netherlands who send researchers to do their work among the Q'eqchi'es. Those linked to these centres do not speak with one voice. Pentecostal and Catholic missionaries, or various scientists for that matter, are not the only ones who emphasize their differences.

This polycentric and polyvocal character of the globalizing world does not just pose threats to the creolizing capacity of the Q'eqchi'es and to the relative autonomy of their local communities, it also opens up new opportunities. In the last decade, new groups and NGOs made up of Indians who successfully completed higher education emerge to speak out and mediate. Stimulated by such events as the commemoration of the colonization of the continent five centuries ago, the Nobel price awarded to the K'iche' Rigoberta Menchú as well as the United Nations decade of indigenous peoples, many such groups have come to the fore. They have developed contacts, communication and alliances not only with similar groups in other parts of the continent, but also with governments, NGOs and international and multi-national organizations such as the International Labour Organization and the European Union. These flows, including financial ones, allow these groups to function and work quite independently from the Guatemalan state, if only the latter would keep its repressive claws from them. These groups have relatively few relations and organizational connections with the Q'eqchi'es, but their existence may open up perspectives in the future for them to increasingly deal directly with these groups, bypassing the Guatemalan state. Such a perspective would take away much of the pressure which the state exercises on the local communities. Globalization is not only about risks but also about new openings and chances.

On the other hand, these global flows are marked by basic asymmetrical features[35]; they have a multi-staged character involving

[35]. See Hannerz 1992: 219.

various interfaces at various levels before they reach the Q'eqchi'es and involve asymmetrical power relations. These asymmetrical power relations justify the rescue of the centre-periphery framework of analysis from dependency theory. However, one can only do so after having stressed the very differentiated nature of these relations between various actors and agencies at a multiplicity of levels. Therefore I prefer to talk about centres and peripheries in the plural.

Even more, in recognizing asymmetrical power relations, we do not necessarily have to adopt a basically dialectical model of interpretation. Such a recognition does not necessarily compel us to portray those in power as harming the interests of those with fewer power resources at their disposal or "destroying" their culture and economic opportunities. Neither does it force us to conceive of the latter as compliant victims of or resistance fighters against oppression or manipulation of those in power. In other words, by recognizing power asymmetries we do not need to adopt an oppression/manipulation versus resistance/compliance opposition as we find, for example, in the cultural imperialism thesis. To be sure, the influence of the Guatemalan army, for example, cannot be characterized in any way other than antagonistic to and very harmful in its effects on the Q'eqchi'es, but the same can hardly be said of intervening actors such as the clergy practising a policy of liberating pastoral work.

To be sure, Q'eqchi' communities involved in land conflicts do conceive of INTA and the landlords as their adversaries, something expressed by the fact that these categories of aj Kastii are particularly feared. However we cannot conclude from this that their ways of dealing with intervening actors and agencies in general make sense in terms of compliance or resistance, as shown by the two keys of their dealing with intervening actors and agencies (see Chapter Two). The ability to maintain their relative autonomy towards these agencies and their determination to improve their situation vis-à-vis the aj Kastii by enlarging their access to resources without entering into conflict or competition, do not make sense in terms of either compliance or resistance. Compliance is not an appropriate term because the maintenance of their relative autonomy is clearly not in line with the intentions of the Guatemalan state. The Q'eqchi'es' intention to enlarge access to resources can hardly be interpreted as compliance either.

In addition, the avoidance of conflict does not stem from any approval of existing social relations and conditions, nor do the Q'eqchi'es simply refrain from open conflict because they are aware that this would just lead to more bloodshed. The awareness that they would taste defeat in open conflict is certainly present among many of the Q'eqchi'es and I argue in Chapter Two that they feel they do not have the resources to defend themselves against the aj Kastii; however this awareness is not the main reason for abstaining from violent or open opposition. This would imply that if they had sufficient power resources at their disposal, they would enter into such conflict, which is highly speculative.

Such resistance thinking is refuted by the fact that the Q'eqchi'es with whom I discussed about these subjects in confidence told me that they wish to improve their situation but not against or at the cost of the resources held by others. They clearly want their children to live a better life than they do, but they do not conceive of this desire in terms of opposition to the aj Kastii. They express their distrust towards the aj Kastii in stronger or weaker terms, but their basic idea is to meet them on equal terms in a climate of harmony. They do not link an improvement in their situation with concessions of power or resources from the aj Kastii. Interestingly, even those respondents who were involved in land conflicts and who expressed their fear of the landlords, the army and INTA officials, expressed themselves in similar terms. They basically want the aj Kastii to leave them alone.

In my view, efforts to force these intentions and ideas into categories of either compliance or resistance miss the point. Of course, any exogenous researcher "with his or her heart in the right place" cannot escape feelings of rejection and denunciation about the way in which many Q'eqchi'es are forced to live, and reasons to denounce cases of social injustice abound. These feelings and reasons do not just stem from the large gap between what the researcher is used to and what he or she is confronted with in the Q'eqchi' region, especially when the researcher has boarded his or her plane in a relatively comfortable place in North America or Western Europe. Many events such as the bloodshed which the army has inflicted on thousands of Q'eqchi'es are wrong by any standard.

Given such facts and feelings, one can understand why researchers adopt a dialectical framework of analysis and interpret the practices and meanings of the Q'eqchi'es in terms of compliance or resistance. However, after taking a closer look, I hold that this is not how the Q'eqchi'es predominantly deal with, for example, their religion and economy. Creolization is clearly related to power relations, and the relative autonomy of the local community and household has been identified as an essential condition for the creolization of the Q'eqchi'es; however it does not follow from these considerations that their creolizing way of dealing with religion and economy can be understood in terms of compliance or resistance. Is the maintenance of endogenous or pre-modern forms, such as the belief in the Tzuultaq'a or the practice of group-wise labour, an act of resistance against powerful intervening agencies? Is the selective adoption of technology offered by DIGESA for example an act of compliance? Such interpretations try to impose a rather essentialist interpretation upon processes of creolization and simply do not make sense.

In short, the centres-peripheries framework does make sense in interpreting processes of globalization and creolization because they highlight the importance of power relations associated with these processes, but this framework should not be confused with a dialectical model or a revival of the cultural imperialism thesis. The often paternalistic attitude of those advocating this thesis is related to the fact that they often attribute

very little power to the oppressed. Claiming that their actions and meaning-making can only be guided either by resistance or by compliance implies that the powerful are able to set the agenda of the oppressed to a very large degree. As far as the Q'eqchi'es are concerned, I contend that problems and issues of modernization as well as the elements offered to them by intervening agencies and actors in relation to their endogenous meanings and practices do set an important part of the agenda of the Q'eqchi'es. However, as long as they are able to retain their local relative autonomy the Q'eqchi'es do not care much about asymmetrical power relations as such. On the contrary, the fact that they are able to construct meanings and decide what to do with respect to problems of modernization and exogenous and endogenous elements means that they maintain a considerable level of power. Consequently, they do not feel the need to work out specific power strategies characterized by either resistance or compliance.

Moreover, the emphasis in the contemporary modern world is as much on fragmentation[36], on differences or the heterogeneous as on synchronization, the uniform or the homogeneous (see Chapter One). In section 9.2 creolization was characterized as a way of dealing with modernization; fundamentalism represents another way. The creolizing way accepts the relativization of one's own culture and endogenous forms in order to articulate them with exogenous forms. The fundamentalist way tries to reject this relativization and opposes the exogenous and often the modern while making an absolute claim about the value of its own culture and endogenous forms. In this manner the fundamentalist way emphasizes the particular and tries to stress the difference with others who are defined as belonging to other cultures.

Creolization has a strong paradoxical nature in this respect. The act of merging and synthesizing counteracts fragmentation and disintegration, while the products of these mergers themselves constitute something new that cannot be reduced to the original categories. As such, these products contribute to foster further differences. In this respect, both fundamentalism and creolization foment differences, the former directly and the latter rather indirectly, the former rejecting relativization and the latter embracing it.

Relating these two ways of dealing with modernization to the centres and peripheries framework, I would say that both can be found at all levels. Advocates and opponents of relativization can be found both at the centres and at the peripheries.

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[36]. Including the fragmentation of identity constructions and social inequality. In such a context any singular and unequivocal dialectical or bi-polar model to interpret social inequality becomes highly questionable even at the micro level, let alone at a global level.

9.6 Creolization and scientific writing

In a way, this book itself is a product of globalization. Without the compression of the world, modern techniques of communication and transport and world-wide communications, the very idea of a Dutchman writing a book about the Q'eqchi'es would be impossible. Moreover, the concepts of modernization and creolization allude to many of the experiences I went through while preparing myself, doing fieldwork, analyzing my data and writing this book.

Problems that go hand in hand with modernization mark my experiences as a researcher. I have weathered both the possibilities of new experiences and fresh knowledge and the dangers of rootlessness and increasing uncertainty, both the opportunities to widen my horizon and the feeling of losing the ground under my feet, both the fascinating experience of hearing about identity constructions that were unknown to me and the increasing relativization of my own identity. Looking Q'eqchi'es in their eyes made me aware of both the tremendous cultural differences between us and the basic similarities of human feelings and experiences without being able to tell exactly where the differences start and the similarities end. In short, I have experienced both euphoria and culture shock[37] in my intercultural communication with the Q'eqchi'es, and it is the unstable synthesis of the two which made this book possible.

In my view, this research process illustrates what contemporary modernity, with its globalizing and relativizing components, is all about. It is about both chances and risks, opportunities and dangers, construction and destruction, fascination and anxiety. It puts increasing strain on every social actor, both at the peripheries and at the centres, to find his or her way in the face of these frightening and promising features of contemporary modernity. Experiencing authenticity, leading an ordered life, creating a sense of belonging and destiny, constructing a coherent identity framework, securing a stable and lasting network of social relations which one can depend on, or writing a plausible and consistent book about someone else; all these endeavours require ever more creativity, explicit meaning-making and the articulation of the new and the known, the endogenous and the exogenous. There is ever less security, given meanings and contexts, and the taken-for-granted and the goes-without-saying are increasingly hard to find. In order to experience some balance and sense, one is ever more compelled to create linkages, to associate, to articulate or to create knowledge in the face of increasingly isolated bits of information, statements, slogans, images and short-term sensations.

The act of writing this book, my way of dealing with these problems which I had to face in the course of my research, resembles the process of

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[37]. See Hofstede 1991.

creolization. It is the result of my effort to integrate meanings and information stemming from the Q'eqchi'es into the analytical framework and cultural terms of reference that I constructed in the course of my life inside and outside Dutch academia. In trying to be faithful to the rules of the scientific game, which include making my concepts and methods explicit and relativizing my own frames of references, I hope I have presented a plausible story about the Q'eqchi'es. Such relativization has opened up the possibility of articulating my own concepts, understanding and interpretations with the meanings and information transmitted to me by the Q'eqchi'es, which may pass the examination and become accepted as knowledge by academic tribunals.

However, the act of writing itself and the scientific approach to which I must adhere, present serious handicaps to attempts to creolize. In the preceding sections of this chapter, I pointed to the basic concordance between association as a cognitive act of data processing (section 9.3) and articulation as a social act of creolization (sections 9.2 and 9.4). Association and articulation have been shown to stand out as basic characteristics of the ways Q'eqchi'es think and act. Then as a researcher trying to make sense of Q'eqchi'es making sense, I am forced to proceed in a way that contradicts many basic features of association and articulation as discussed in the previous sections.

To begin with, the act of writing forces me to follow an unilinear or serial sequence of argumentation. It leaves me no other option but to cut off all kinds of parallel associations which characterize the associative ways the Q'eqchi'es themselves process information and structure their discourses. These associations can, at best, be problematically and somewhat artificially integrated into a single story line at a later stage. A book does not seem to be an adequate medium for informing someone about the Q'eqchi'es. For example, this book may create the false impression that its sequence of information and chapters reflects the way Q'eqchi'es would serially interrelate information, which they do not. Recently developed multimedia programmes with interactive procedures seem much more suited to the basic associative and parallel processes of information processing and discourse construction of the Q'eqchi'es because they allow for parallel and multilinear logical spaces.

Moreover the rational manner in which the researcher is supposed to proceed, following the rules of the game, does not respond either to the articulation and association found in the acts and thoughts of the Q'eqchi'es. It prescribes the use of unequivocal concepts while the Q'eqchi'es often associate various meanings with the same word and symbol. Next, it requires that the narrow relations between meanings and emotions should be cut through, which is highly artificial. Finally, it creates the "illusion" of decontextualized knowledge about the Q'eqchi'es whereas it has been clearly established that meanings have a highly contextualized character for the

Q'eqchi'es. Concerning the latter, I refer not only to their religious and economic meanings but also to their identity constructions.

An example of the latter is presented by the two religious principles outlined in Chapter Four. They were derived by this researcher from a large number of individual statements by my respondents. In the same way, I have tried to detect and interrelate the various elements of Q'eqchi' economic strategies. Of course, this rational method of constructing religious principles contradicts the associative nature of Q'eqchi' religion and economy. The act of writing entails the serial interrelation of meanings in one coherent story whereas the Q'eqchi'es tend to associate different meanings to different occasions and contexts which may easily contradict each other. I have used this narrative form in order to provide the reader with some insights and understanding of Q'eqchi' religion and economy. The objective of transmitting these insights and this understanding without suggesting possible consequences that might emanate from the specific discursive form I have used, has been my constant concern.

This book has an alienating character because it tries to present decontextualized knowledge about the contextualized meaning-making of the Q'eqchi'es. It is artificial in the sense that it tries to separate meanings from emotions. It forcefully imposes unequivocal concepts upon ambiguous symbols and words used by the Q'eqchi'es themselves. This, however, is unavoidable given that my intention is to transmit knowledge about the Q'eqchi'es to the reader. After all, this knowledge is supposed to be as exact, precise and clear as possible. It is required to be as plausible and understandable as possible, especially to those who are outside the life-world of the Q'eqchi'es. Given the fact that "truth" and "objective" knowledge of which we can be "certain" and that can be "proven" are impossible, the act of the researcher trying to make sense of other people making sense cannot avoid some degree of friction, handicaps and alienation. Knowledge has its price.

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GLOSSARY

Acción Católica (C)	Catholic Action, Catholic lay movement
Agentes multiplicadores de pastoral social (C)	Representatives of the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the bishopric of Verapaz in the local communities
Akala'es (Q)	Name of an ethnic group
Alcalde Auxiliar (C)	Auxiliary mayor, representative of the mayor in the local community
Alcalde Mayor (C)	Spanish colonial administrator
Aldea (C)	Village, local community not situated on a finca or hacienda
Asamblea de Dios (C)	Assembly of God, Pentecostal church
Asociación Guatemalteca de Beneficiencia (AGUABEN) (C)	Evangelical non-governmental development organization
Atol (C)	Drink made of maize flour
Awas (Q)	Taboo, prescription of how to deal with "persons" and objects, disease caused by maltreating "persons" or objects
B'antioxink (Q)	Thanksgiving at the moment of harvesting maize
B'oj (Q)	Local liquor made of sugar cane
Baldío (C)	Piece of land that has no private owner and consequently belongs to the state
Banco Nacional de Desarrollo Agrícola (BANDESA) (C)	Agricultural development bank, state bank
Caballería (C)	Area measure, 45.1 hectares, 64.6 manzanas
Cacique (C)	Title of local indigenous leader in the colonial period
Caminos Rurales (C)	State agency responsible for constructing and maintaining roads
Camionero (C)	Merchant with truck
Castellano (C)	Person who speaks Spanish, someone who is not Q'eqchi'
Centro Educativo Kekchí (C	Name of education centre
Ch'oles (Q)	Name of an ethnic group
Chi junil (Q)	'It is all the same', Q'eqchi' expression indicating that they do not care about contradictions or that all community members come together
Chinam (Q)	Member of rural confraternity

Chirimía (C)	Kind of flute
Cofradía (C)	Kind of confraternity, urban religious brotherhood dedicated to a special saint
Comisionado Militar (C)	Military commissioner representing the army in the local community
Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (CACIF) (C)	The most important employers organization in Guatemala
Comité de Desarrollo Local (C)	Local Development Committee in the local communities
Comité Nacional de Alfabetización (CONALFA) (C)	Mixed government-private sector agency of adult education
Comité Pro Mejoramiento (C)	Improvement Committee in the local communities
Compadre (C)	Name parents give to the godparents of their child
Copal pom (Q)	Substance made of resin and used on ceremonial occasions
Costumbre (C)	Custom, in its plural form used to designate indigenous culture
Cuerda (C)	Area measure, 436.7 square metres
Cursillos de cristiandad (C)	Catholic lay movement of religious education and worship
Defensores de la Naturaleza (C)	Non-governmental organization focusing on environmental conservation
Desarrollo de la Comunidad (C)	State agency promoting local development in the 1980s
Dirección General de Servicios Agrícolas (DIGESA) (C)	Sub-division of ministry of agriculture promoting agrarian production among small and medium sized peasants and farmers
Dirección General de Servicios Pecuarios (DIGESEPE) (C)	Sub-division of ministry of agriculture promoting livestock raising among small and medium sized peasants and farmers
Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) (C)	One of the armed revolutionary organizations in Guatemala
El Clamor por la Tierra (C)	Pastoral letter of the Guatemalan bishops calling for land reform
El Verbo (C)	Name of a neo-Pentecostal church
Empresa de Fomento y Desarrollo del Petén (FYDEP) (C)	Official development organization of the department of El Petén until 1990

Encomienda (C)	Colonial system granting individual Spaniards the right to collect tribute from a certain number of Indians
Faenas (C)	Communitarian tasks which all the community members are supposed to perform
Federación de Cooperativas de las Verapaces (FEDECOVERA) (C)	Federation of production cooperatives in Alta and Baja Verapaz
Finca (C)	Large privately owned estate dedicated to agrarian production
Finca nacional (C)	Large state owned estate dedicated to agrarian production
Finquero (C)	Large landowner
Garífunas (C)	Afro-Caribbean ethnic group living in Lívingston and Puerto Barrios, Honduras and Belize
Gramoxone (C)	Chemical product used to disinfect the land after clearing it
Guardia de la Hacienda (C)	Para-military rural police
Guerrilleros (C)	Armed resistance fighters
Habilitación (C)	Hereditary labour recruitment system in which workers receive payment in advance and pay off their debt with interest by working on a finca, debt peonage
Hacienda (C)	Large privately owned estate dedicated to livestock raising
Hermandad (C)	Urban religious brotherhood organizing religious ceremonies in the Holy Week
Huipil (C)	Typical white blouse worn by Q'eqchi' women
Huisquil (C)	Kind of vegetable
Iglesia de Dios de la Nueva Jerusalén (C)	Name of a Pentecostal church
Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo (C)	Name of a Pentecostal church
Iglesia del Nazareno (C)	Name of a "Holiness" church
Iglesia Evangélica de Cristo (C)	Name of a Pentecostal church
Ilonel (Q)	Customary healer
Indígena (C)	Indian, indigenous
Instituto Bíblico Nazareno (C)	Name of theological institution of the Nazarene's church
Instituto de Ciencia y Tecnología Agrícolas (ICTA) (C)	Official institution adapting agrarian technology to local conditions

Instituto Guatemalteco de Educación Radiofónica (IGER) (C)	Non-governmental organization promoting education by way of radio programmes in Guatemala
Instituto Nacional de Comercialización Agrícola (INDECA) (C)	State organization providing storage facilities to peasants and farmers
Instituto Nacional de Cooperativas (INACOP) (C)	Name of a para-statal organization promoting cooperatives
Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria (INTA) (C)	State organization responsible for giving out land titles in settlement areas
Instituto Técnico de Capacitación y Productividad (INTECAP) (C)	Name of a para-statal development organization
Instituto Teológico Nazareno (C)	Name of theological institution of the Nazarene's church
Intendente (C)	Local ruler appointed by the government in the 1930s
Itza'es (Q)	Name of an ethnic group
Jornaleros (C)	Day labourers
K'anjel (Q)	Work, (moral) effort
K'iche'es (Q)	Name of an ethnic group
Kastii (Q)	Name the Q'eqchi'es use to designate non-Q'eqchi'es, those who speak Castilian
Ladino (C)	Guatemalan not belonging to an indigenous or Afro-Caribbean group, speaking Castilian
Lakandones (Q)	Name of an ethnic group
Latifundio (C)	Large estate
Legión de María (C)	Catholic lay movement of women dedicated to Santa María
Libra (C)	Weight measure, 453 grams
Lote (C)	Piece of land reserved for house building
Ma'us (Q)	Bad spirit
Manzana (C)	Area measure, 6987.2 square metres, 16 cuerdas
Marimba (C)	Musical instrument
Maya-Mopanes (Q)	Name of an ethnic group living in San Luís Petén and Belize
Mayejak (Q)	Sacrifice ritual dedicated to the mountain spirit, community rituals just before clearing the land
Mayordomo (C)	Office holder in religious brotherhood, elders
Mertom (Q)	Assistant of chinam

Minifundio (C)	Small estate
Ministro (C)	Catholic lay leader receiving his orders directly from a Salesian priest and offering communion
Mozos colonos (C)	Permanent labourers living on a finca or hacienda
Na'leb' (Q)	Culture, knowledge
Padrino (C)	Godfather
Parcelamiento (C)	Individual land title
Pasawink (Q)	Man and woman who have served as chinam, elders
Patrimonio agrario colectivo (C)	Land title of a mixed communitarian and individual character
Patrón (C)	Landlord, employer
Petate (C)	Small mat used to sleep on
Poqomchi'es (Q)	Name of an ethnic group living in the southwestern part of the department of Alta Verapaz
Posadas (C)	Religious rituals performed in the nine days preceding Christmas
Príncipe de Paz (C)	Name of Pentecostal church
Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe (PRONEBI) (C)	Official bilingual education programme
Promotores pecuarios (C)	Livestock raising promoters
Proyecto Quetzal (C)	Non-governmental organization promoting ecological conservation
Qana' (Q)	Lady, respectful term used to address a woman
Qawa' (Q)	Lord, sir, mister, respectful term used to address a man
Quetzal (C)	Famous tropical bird, national Guatemalan currency, at the time of fieldwork five quetzales equaled one US dollar
Quintal (C)	Weight measure, 45.3 kilos
Rab'inal Achi'es (Q)	Name of ethnic group living in Baja Verapaz
Reducciones (C)	Indian population concentrated in towns by the Spaniards
Representantes agrícolas (C)	Representatives of the ministry of agriculture in the local rural communities
Rilomil tzuul (Q)	'Seen by the mountain', customary disease
Roxil (Q)	Third couple in the hierarchy of chinames
Técnico de salud (C)	Employee of a health centre in charge of improving hygienic conditions
Tierra caliente (C)	'Warm land', lowlands
Tierra fría (C)	'Cold land', land on high altitudes
Tierra templada (C)	'Moderate land', land situated between highlands and lowlands

Tortilla (C)	Pancake made of maize flour
Túnica Blanca (C)	Name of a confraternity in San Pedro Carchá
Túnica Morada (C)	Name of a confraternity in San Pedro Carchá
Tuul (Q)	Witch, sorcerer
Tzuultaq'a (Q)	Mountain spirit, mountain and valley, sacred landscape
Veterinarios sin Fronteras (C)	Non-governmental organization of veterinary medicine
Violencia (C)	'Violence', name given to the period marked by massive violations of human rights in the late 1970s and early 1980s
Vitamina "A" (C)	Non-governmental organization promoting health and the cultivation of vegetables
Wa'tesink re li kab'l (Q)	'Feeding the house' rituals at the time of entering a new house
Xb'enil (Q)	First couple in the hierarchy of chinames
Xiw (Q)	'Spirit loss', customary disease
Xkab'il (Q)	Second couple in the hierarchy of chinames
Yo'lek (Q)	Ritual of keeping vigil while addressing all that abide in the universe
Yuca (C)	Kind of vegetable
Yuwa' ch'och (Q)	'Chief of the land', customary leader in charge of allocating household lands

(C): word in Castilian.
(Q): word in *Q'eqchi'* or other Guatemalan indigenous language.

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SAMENVATTING

CREOLISERING EN MODERNISERING IN DE PERIFERIE:

DE Q'EQCHI'ES IN GUATEMALA

Inleiding

De hedendaagse wereld verdicht. Door processen van mondialisering worden sociale actoren in toenemende mate geconfronteerd met stromen van mensen, kapitaal, goederen, symbolen, informatie en beelden vanuit verschillende delen van de wereld. Niet alleen door internet verbonden kosmopoliete zakenlieden, journalisten of wetenschappers in hun zakencentra, bureaus, conferenties of luchthavens staan aan deze stromen bloot. Zelfs inheemse volkeren in delen van de wereld die tot voor kort als geïsoleerd en afgelegen werden beschouwd, hebben steeds meer te maken met het nieuwe en onbekende. Je vraagt je af of er nog ruimte over is aan de andere kant van de Coca Cola-grens.

Vanwege deze stromen zien sociale actoren zich in toenemende mate gedwongen om nieuwe impulsen te beantwoorden, hun voorstellingen en praktijken aan te passen, hun identiteiten te herdefiniëren en hun manieren te verfijnen om met een steeds wijdere buitenwereld om te gaan. Mondiale stromen worden gelokaliseerd en opgenomen in specifieke contexten. Mondialisering veronderstelt lokalisering.

De naar schatting 600.000 Q'eqchi'es wonen in een gebied van ongeveer 20.000 vierkante kilometer in het noorden van Guatemala. Ze vormen een voorbeeld van een groep van actoren die steeds meer met mondiale stromen te maken krijgen. Dat zou je op het eerste gezicht niet zeggen. Zij leven in naar schatting 1600, in hoofdzaak rurale gemeenschappen relatief ver weg van stedelijke en internationale centra. De dorpen en plantages waar ze wonen, zijn maar gebrekkig ontsloten door wegen en ze hebben relatief weinig toegang tot andere communicatiemiddelen. Bovendien staan ze in de Guatemalteekse context bekend om hun reserves ten aanzien van externe invloeden en om hun vasthoudendheid aan hun eigen taal en kleding.

Bij nader inzien wordt echter snel duidelijk dat ook de Q'eqchi'es te maken hebben met processen van mondialisering. Hun handelsgewassen, vooral koffie en de specerij kardemom, worden in Noord-Amerika, Europa en de Arabische wereld geconsumeerd. Kerken met hun centra in verschillende delen van de wereld proberen invloed uit te oefenen op hun religieuze voorstellingen en praktijken. Uitgerekend verschillende elementen die hun

tradities symboliseren, zoals het feest van de patroonheilige en de religieuze broederschappen, hebben een Europees Katholieke oorsprong. Juist vanwege deze relatie tussen hun eigenheid en externe invloeden vormen de Q'eqchi'es een zeer interessant voorbeeld om de invloed van mondialiseringsprocessen te bestuderen.

De literatuurlijst met publikaties over mondialisering en lokalisering groeit met de dag. De discussie over deze thema's heeft tot hernieuwde aandacht voor een van de centrale vraagstukken binnen de sociale wetenschappen geleid, de rol en betekenis van moderniteit en modernisering. De volgende belangwekkende vragen worden opgeworpen. Wijzen processen van mondialisering en lokalisering in de richting van een toenemende homogenisering op wereldschaal waarbij moderne eigenschappen en structuren steeds meer dominant worden? Nopen of dwingen deze processen sociale actoren in verschillende delen van de wereld ertoe om premoderne voorstellingen, praktijken en structuren voor moderne of zelfs postmoderne in te ruilen? Resulteren mondialisering en lokalisering onomwonden in modernisering?

In het eerste hoofdstuk van dit boek wordt een poging ondernomen om invulling te geven aan de begrippen moderniteit en modernisering vanuit de relevante theoretische literatuur. Daarbij moet allereerst afstand worden genomen van de zogenaamde moderniseringstheorie uit de jaren vijftig en zestig waarin de rijke literatuur over deze thema's sterk wordt versimpeld en vertekend. Moderniteit kan niet worden opgevat als een eenduidig en homogeen fenomeen dat een lineair proces van modernisering voorschrijft. Moderniteit en modernisering verwijzen veeleer naar problemen, paradoxen en dilemma's. Grootvaders van de sociale wetenschappen zoals Durkheim, Marx en Weber waren al geenszins overtuigd van de zegeningen van moderniteit en modernisering.

Desondanks zijn er wel terdege enkele hoofdlijnen aan te geven van wat in de literatuur onder premoderne en moderne kenmerken van sociale relaties en discoursen wordt verstaan. Daarbij dringt onder de betrokken schrijvers steeds meer het besef door dat er een onderscheid moet worden gemaakt tussen twee condities of configuraties van moderniteit. In dit boek zullen in dit verband de termen oorspronkelijk modern en contemporain modern worden gehanteerd. De opkomst van het religieuze veld, gekenmerkt door religieuze instituties en specialisten, vormt een voorbeeld van een oorspronkelijk modern fenomeen dat afbrokkelt in een meer contemporain moderne context. Hetzelfde geldt voor de opkomst van de nationale staat. Onder de term contemporain modern worden verschijnselen gevat waar postmodernisten op wijzen, zoals de fragmentatie van de sociale moraal of van individuele betekenisgeving en identiteitsconstructies. In navolging van onder andere Giddens wordt in dit boek betoogd dat deze verschijnselen op zichzelf nog geen breuk met moderniteit rechtvaardigen of

betekenen.[1] Onder contemporain modern worden ook de huidige processen van mondialisering verstaan.

Op basis van een bespreking van vijf hoofdlijnen van modernisering - *disembedding*[2], differentiatie, rationalisering, secularisering en commoditisering - worden de begrippen premodern, oorspronkelijk modern en contemporain modern ingevuld om vervolgens de centrale vragen te formuleren die richting geven aan deze studie van de Q'eqchi'es. Kunnen de verschillende aspecten van de sociale realiteit van de Q'eqchi'es worden geclassificeerd in de termen premodern, oorspronkelijk modern en contemporain modern? Zo ja, hoe gaan de Q'eqchi'es met deze aspecten van hun realiteit om? Zijn ze bezig premoderne elementen voor oorspronkelijk of contemporain moderne aspecten in te ruilen en bevinden ze zich op weg naar verdere modernisering?

Het veldwerk dat ten grondslag ligt aan deze studie, vond plaats op verzoek van de bisschop van het bisdom Verapaz, Mgr. Gerardo Flores Reyes, en verschillende diocesane instanties. De meerderheid van de bevolking van het bisdom Verapaz bestaat uit Q'eqchi'es en de meerderheid van de Q'eqchi'es woont in dit bisdom, maar daarnaast wordt ook een belangrijk deel van de bevolking van de bisdommen en aan bisdommen verwante eenheden van El Quiché, El Petén en Izabal gevormd door Q'eqchi'es. Onder een deel van de clerus bestaat de overtuiging dat de kerk, na ongeveer vijf eeuwen van pastoraal werk onder de Q'eqchi'es, meer gevoelig zou moeten worden voor hun manier van leven. De kerk zou een meer stimulerende rol moeten gaan spelen ten aanzien van hun cultuur en ontwikkelingsproblematiek. Dit onderzoek zou meer inzicht moeten verschaffen in de religie en ontwikkelingsproblemen van de Q'eqchi'es en de rol die de kerk ten aanzien van beide aspecten speelt. Ondersteund door het bisdom, de Rafael Landívar Universiteit en het onderzoeksinstituut AVANCSO in Guatemala heb ik het veldwerk verricht in 1991 en 1992.

In een eerste fase heb ik de gehele Q'eqchi' regio in kaart gebracht wat betreft demografische, economische, sociale, politieke en religieuze kenmerken. In de volgende fase heb ik enkele lokale gemeenschappen gekozen op basis van criteria die uit de eerste fase naar voren kwamen als bepalend voor de diversiteit aan lokale gemeenschappen. Op deze manier heb ik een zekere mate van representativiteit willen waarborgen en in dit boek komen vier dorpen op een prominente wijze naar voren. Ik heb me in het veldwerk vooral gericht op de religie, economie, onderwijs en gezondheidszorg van de Q'eqchi'es. In dit boek heb ik alleen hun religie en economie uitgewerkt.

In hoofdstuk twee worden de geschiedenis, enkele sleutelaspecten van hun leefwereld - huishoudens, lokaal leiderschap, identiteitsconstructies,

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[1]. Giddens 1990.

[2]. Communicatie vindt niet zozeer meer plaats ingebed in lokale sociale relaties, maar veeleer buiten de lokale context om.

strategieën naar de buitenwereld toe, onderwijs en politiek - en de vier dorpen gepresenteerd. Daarna volgen twee blokken over eerst de religie en vervolgens de economie van de Q'eqchi'es. Elk blok bestaat uit drie hoofdstukken. Het eerste hoofdstuk van elk blok (hoofdstuk drie en hoofdstuk zes) behandelt de praktijken en voorstellingen van de instanties en actoren die interveniëren in de leefwereld van de Q'eqchi'es, maar hun oorsprong daarbuiten hebben. Deze instanties en actoren bestaan vrijwel uitsluitend uit niet-Q'eqchi'es. Het gaat hier bijvoorbeeld om kerken en landbouwvoorlichters die mondiale stromen van mensen, goederen, kapitaal en betekenissen aanpassen en doorgeven aan de Q'eqchi'es. Ook de religieuze en economische leiders binnen de gemeenschappen komen in deze hoofdstukken aan bod.

In het tweede hoofdstuk van elk blok (de hoofdstukken vier en zeven) worden de belangrijkste praktijken en voorstellingen van de Q'eqchi'es zelf op het gebied van religie en economie gepresenteerd en geanalyseerd. Op basis van deze analyse worden de hoofdlijnen van hun religie en economische strategieën uiteengezet.

In het derde hoofdstuk van elk blok (hoofdstukken vijf en acht) worden de praktijken en voorstellingen van de interveniërende instanties en actoren en van de Q'eqchi'es zelf teruggekoppeld naar de vraagstelling. Hierbij wordt enerzijds de vraag gesteld of die voorstellingen en praktijken te classificeren zijn in de termen premodern, oorspronkelijk modern en contemporain modern en of er sprake is van een overgang van premoderne naar oorspronkelijk of contemporain moderne praktijken en betekenissen. Anderzijds wordt bekeken in hoeverre de interveniërende instanties in staat zijn om hun voorstellingen en praktijken ingang te doen vinden bij de Q'eqchi'es en in hoeverre de Q'eqchi'es speelruimte hebben om hun eigen praktijken en voorstellingen te bepalen. Het gaat dus niet alleen om de soort van praktijken en voorstellingen die zowel interveniërende instanties en actoren als de Q'eqchi'es zelf voorstaan, het gaat ook om de macht om deze te realiseren en om de ander te beïnvloeden.

Q'eqchi' religie

De Katholieke kerk is veruit de grootste kerk temidden van de Q'eqchi'es, maar het is haar pas sinds de jaren zestig gelukt om haar aanwezigheid te herstellen. Als gevolg van de Liberale Hervorming was ze vrijwel verdwenen na 1871. Bovendien ondervindt ze sinds de jaren zeventig in toenemende mate 'concurrentie' van een breed scala aan evangelische kerken. Tussen de twintig en dertig procent van de Q'eqchi'es is lid van een evangelische kerk. Daarnaast is de Katholieke kerk zelf sterk verdeeld tussen in hoofdzaak twee stromingen die elk een specifiek soort van pastoraal werk bedrijven: sacramentalistisch en bevrijdend pastoraal werk. In de lokale gemeenschappen zorgen lokale evangelische leiders en catechisten voor het kerkelijk

leven. Zij worden opgeleid en geleid door respectievelijk dominees en priesters en religieuzen. Daarnaast stimuleren *costumbre* leiders zoals de *chinames*, de *cofrades*, de *pasawink* en de *aj ilonel* en *aj tuul* de gemeenschap om religieuze praktijken te realiseren en voorstellingen te respecteren die hen vanuit hun traditie, of costumbre, worden aangereikt.

De religieuze praktijken die de clerus en dominees bevorderen en hun discoursen dragen een sterk oorspronkelijk modern karakter. Ten eerste claimen ze een religieuze autoriteit en het recht om de religie van de Q'eqchi'es te beïnvloeden. Ten tweede prediken ze een religieus discours dat een rationeel, systematisch en moraliserend karakter draagt en afkomstig is van kerkelijke centra in verschillende delen van de wereld. Ze pretenderen dat dit discours universele en eeuwige geldigheid heeft. Ten derde kent vooral de Katholieke kerk een sterk engagement om de sociale problemen van de Q'eqchi'es te helpen oplossen.

Deze drie argumenten gelden voor vrijwel al deze 'religieuze specialisten', daarnaast vertonen deze specialisten belangrijke onderlinge verschillen. De autoriteitsclaim van de sacramentalistische clerus is exclusief, deze clerus marginaliseert of incorporeert costumbre leiders. In dat laatste geval worden deze leiders geacht hun costumbre praktijken achter zich te laten. Deze priesters en religieuzen verwachten een absolute trouw van de gelovigen, ze benadrukken individuele morele en religieuze verantwoordelijkheid en hun voorstellingen ten aanzien van de natuur en sociale realiteit dragen een strikt profaan karakter.

Deze onverbloemd oorspronkelijk moderne kenmerken zijn minder duidelijk aanwezig bij bevrijdend pastoraal werk. De clerus die dit concept van pastoraal werk praktizeert, benadrukt de dialoog met de Q'eqchi' leken over legitieme religieuze praktijken en voorstellingen. Deze clerus streeft ernaar om costumbre voorstellingen en praktijken en de rol van costumbre leiders te herwaarderen en waar nodig te herstellen. Ze benadrukken de waarde van gemeenschapsleven en het gemeenschappelijk zoeken naar oplossingen voor sociale problemen op basis van de eigen kennis en strategieën van de Q'eqchi'es.

Ten aanzien van de autoriteitsclaim, het rationeel karakter van hun discours en het sociale engagement bestaat er grote verschillen tussen evangelische kerken. Maar de macht en autoriteit van de voorgangers bij de Pinksterkerken, de grootste categorie van evangelische kerken, moet zeker niet worden overschat. Hun diensten kenmerken zich door een emotioneel karakter en van sociale projecten is geen sprake.

De leiders binnen de lokale gemeenschappen - evangelische leiders, catechisten en costumbre leiders - zijn typische *brokers*. Evangelische leiders en catechisten geven de betekenissen door die de dominees en clerus hen onderwijzen en ze dragen zorg voor de kerkelijke praktijken in hun gemeenschap, maar zij zelf praktizeren veelal ook costumbre praktijken met de samenhangende costumbre betekenissen. Het combineren van kerkelijke

praktijken met costumbre rituelen is ook kenmerkend voor de meeste costumbre leiders.

De religieuze praktijken van de 'gewone' Q'eqchi'es kunnen worden onderverdeeld in drie categorieën die in hoofdzaak twee hoofdlijnen van religieuze betekenissen uitdrukken. Ten eerste zijn er de costumbre praktijken en betekenissen. Q'eqchi'es zijn in grote meerderheid boeren. Ze leven tegen de helling van een berg aan of in een dal en veel van wat ze in het dagelijks leven nodig hebben, komt voort uit die berg. Hun voedsel groeit uit de huid van de berg, het water komt langs de berg naar beneden, geneeskrachtige kruiden groeien op de berg en materialen om hun werktuigen en huizen mee te bouwen zijn te vinden tegen de berghellingen. Het is dus niet vreemd dat de Q'eqchi'es wat betreft hun voedselgewassen, watervoorziening, genezing en het bouwen van hun huizen zich tot de berg-en-dal (in Q'eqchi' *Tzuultaq'a*: Tzuul betekent berg en Taq'a staat voor dal) richten. De Q'eqchi'es vatten al deze 'zaken' op als 'personen' voorzien van een geest die voortkomt uit de Tzuultaq'a.

De belangrijkste 'persoon' waarvan ze in hun dagelijks leven afhankelijk zijn, is dus de Tzuultaq'a. Costumbre praktijken hebben een standaard patroon van drie elementen. Ten eerste richt men zich tot de Tzuultaq'a en de geest in kwestie: bijvoorbeeld bij het zaaien van maïs is dat de geest van het zaad, bij het betrekken van een nieuw huis gaat het om de geest van het huis. Ten tweede worden offers gebracht aan de Tzuultaq'a en aan de betrokken geest: bloed of vlees van een kalkoen, maïspannekoekjes, kaarsen en *copal pom* (een soort wierook van hars). Ten derde vraagt men aan de Tzuultaq'a en aan de betrokken geest de relevante dingen die ze nodig hebben zoals een goede oogst en bescherming tegen ongevallen of slangebeten bij het zaaien van maïs. Costumbre praktijken vinden plaats op sleutelmomenten van essentiële processen in het dagelijks leven van de Q'eqchi'es zoals bij ziekte, bij het inwijden van een nieuw huis (*wa'tesink re li kab'l*), bij droogte of overstromingen en op belangrijke momenten in de cyclus van hun voedselgewassen. Voordat ze het land bebouwbaar maken en de vegetatie kappen (*mayejak*), voor en tijdens het inzaaien van de maïs (zaairituelen) en bij het binnenhalen van de oogst (*b'antioxink*) verrichten ze dergelijke praktijken.

Het universum van de Q'eqchi'es kent een veelvoud aan 'personen' tot wie zij zich richten bij costumbre rituelen. De Tzuultaq'a heeft vele gezichten: hij of zij kan mannelijk of vrouwelijk zijn en heeft een Spaanse en een Q'eqchi' naam. Soms staat de specifieke berg-en-dal centraal waartegen de gemeenschap gelegen is maar op andere momenten gaat het om een algemene Tzuultaq'a die de gehele Q'eqchi' regio omvat en gesymboliseerd wordt door dertien speciale bergen. Zo worden bij mayejak rituelen zowel lokale bergen als enkele van deze dertien bezocht. Daarnaast zijn er allerlei 'personen' die afhankelijk zijn van de Tzuultaq'a zoals goede en kwade geesten, maïs en andere voedselgewassen, huizen, water, wind, licht, slangen en andere dieren, geneeskrachtige planten etc. Er zijn heiligen,

voorouders, de priester, de paus, de dominee, naburige gemeenschappen en boven hen allen staat God. De patroonheilige neemt daarbij een speciale plaats in omdat hij of zij de eenheid van de lokale gemeenschap waarborgt en de gemeenschap als geheel dient zich tot deze 'personen' te richten in costumbre rituelen.

In costumbre rituelen richten de Q'eqchi'es zich tot al deze 'personen' om essentiële zaken voor hun dagelijkse leven veilig te stellen. Ze vatten deze 'personen' over het algemeen als betrouwbaar op: als zij zich aan hun rituele verplichtingen houden geven die 'personen' datgene waar de Q'eqchi'es om vragen, zo niet dan straffen ze. Op deze manier wordt de afhankelijkheid ten aanzien van de natuur symbolisch getransformeerd in een wederkerig contract dat de Q'eqchi'es afsluiten met 'personen' in hun universum en dat contract is uiteindelijk van de Q'eqchi'es zelf afhankelijk.

Costumbre religie draagt een sterk premodern karakter. Het vat de natuur als betoverd en persoonlijk op. Het maakt een fundamenteel onderscheid tussen degenen die tot een bepaalde gemeenschap met een relatie met een speciale Tzuultaq'a behoren en degenen die daarbuiten staan. Het benadrukt het belang van de produktie van voedsel en andere produkten voor de eigen consumptie (subsistentie-economie). Het drukt het belang van ruraal gemeenschapsleven uit en het heeft een zeer praktisch en haast tastbaar karakter.

In door de parochie en door evangelische kerken bevorderde praktijken komt een andere hoofdlijn van de religie van de Q'eqchi'es naar voren: Bijbelgerichte religie. De catechisten stimuleren de Q'eqchi'es om de mis of woordvieringen (aan de mis verwante dienst zonder aanwezigheid van een priester) bij te wonen, zich voor te bereiden op het ontvangen van de sacramenten, zich indien nodig te bekeren, aan speciale dagen zoals Kerstmis en de Heilige Week aandacht te geven en vrouwen worden gestimuleerd deel te nemen in vrouwengroepen. De evangelische leiders organiseren meerdere keren per week diensten en bijeenkomsten voor Bijbelstudie, ze houden speciale campagnes en gebedsgenezing en bekering nemen een belangrijke plaats in binnen evangelische kerken.

Bij deze praktijken staat de Bijbelgerichte religie centraal. Hier speelt alleen God een rol en geen enkele andere 'persoon'. De natuur en de wereld zijn weliswaar geschapen door God, maar zijn als zodanig niet bezield. God is veel abstracter dan de Tzuultaq'a en gaat niet over heel concrete dingen in het dagelijks leven, maar over meer abstracte zaken als verlossing, zegening en het algemeen welzijn van de Q'eqchi'es. God is niet verbonden met specifieke zaken zoals de Tzuultaq'a dat is met bijvoorbeeld de maïsoogst. De relatie met God is niet duidelijk wederkerig omdat de Q'eqchi'es nooit weten of Hij hen zal straffen of vergeven nadat ze gezondigd hebben. God richt zich vooral op hun individuele religieuze en morele verantwoordelijkheid wat inhoudt dat de Q'eqchi'es gestimuleerd worden om hun best te doen om hun materiële bestaan te verbeteren.

Bijbelgerichte religie drukt oorspronkelijk moderne kenmerken uit. Het vat de natuur en sociale relaties als profaan op. Het stimuleert de Q'eqchi'es om een moreel leven te leiden en hard te werken. Het richt zich vooral op het individu en op het belang van een tekst als ultieme autoriteit. Het draagt een meer abstract karakter.

Waar het bij de Q'eqchi'es vooral om gaat is het feit dat beide hoofdlijnen, zowel de costumbre als de Bijbelgerichte, integraal deel uitmaken van hun religie. Ze praktizeren rituelen uit verschillende categorieën en drukken daarmee betekenissen uit van beide hoofdlijnen met als gevolg dat hun religie zowel premoderne als moderne elementen bevat. Ze gaan hier op een sterk associatieve en articulerende wijze mee om. Ten eerste zijn ze niet erg geïnteresseerd in mogelijke tegenstrijdigheden tussen betekenissen van beide hoofdlijnen zoals in de vraag of de natuur uiteindelijk als profaan of als persoonlijk moet worden gezien. Dit hangt samen met het feit dat voor hen betekenissen zeer context- en momentgebonden zijn. Bij het zaaien van maïs wordt land persoonlijk opgevat als de huid van de Tzuultaq'a terwijl ze geen enkel probleem zien om voor dat land te betalen als het gaat om het verkrijgen van eigendomspapieren. Bijbelgerichte betekenissen worden uitgedrukt bij door de parochie of evangelische kerk gestimuleerde praktijken, costumbre betekenissen zijn relevant bij costumbre praktijken in contexten waarin deze praktijken gerealiseerd worden. Ten tweede is de ene hoofdlijn in sommige gemeenschappen dominant en de andere hoofdlijn in andere gemeenschappen. In dat geval worden betekenissen van de ondergeschikte hoofdlijn aangepast aan die van de dominante hoofdlijn.

Kortom, Q'eqchi'es articuleren premoderne en oorspronkelijk moderne praktijken binnen hun religie en associëren de betrokken premoderne en oorspronkelijk moderne betekenissen met de praktijken die relevant zijn op het moment dat ze gerealiseerd worden. Ze putten daarbij selectief uit zowel hun eigen tradities als uit externe betekenissen en praktijken die hen door kerken worden aangedragen. Ze bewerken deze praktijken en betekenissen en assembleren daaruit hun eigen religie die beantwoordt aan hun eigen situatie en symbolische behoeften. Op deze processen van articulatie en associatie oefenen religieuze specialisten een aanzienlijke invloed uit, maar ze zijn niet in staat om de Q'eqchi'es af te houden van hun fundamentele articulerende manier van omgaan met premoderne en moderne en met endogene en externe elementen. Deze manier zou ik creolisering willen noemen.

Q'eqchi' economie

De instanties en actoren die interveniëren in de economie van de Q'eqchi'es vormen een breed scala. Zij bestaan uit de grootgrondbezitters, de handelaren, het leger, de staatsinstelling voor het uitgeven van landtitels, de officiële instellingen van landbouwvoorlichting en andere op agrarische activiteiten

gerichte staatsinstellingen, semi-overheidsinstellingen, niet-gouvernementele ontwikkelingsorganisaties en ook de kerken spelen een economische rol ten aanzien van de Q'eqchi'es.

De grootgrondbezitters blokkeren vooral een moderne economische ontwikkeling. Ze investeren weinig in hun landgoederen, hun koffie- en kardemomplantages kenmerken zich door semi-feodale arbeidsverhoudingen, ze ontzeggen hun Q'eqchi' landarbeiders veelal de toegang tot onderwijs en gezondheidszorg en hun landerijen vormen naast bevolkingsgroei de belangrijkste oorzaak van de toenemende schaarste aan land waar Q'eqchi' gemeenschappen mee te maken hebben. Zo worden de kansen voor deze gemeenschappen om hun moderne marktgerichte produktie uit te breiden aanzienlijk verkleind. Landeigenaren vormen een bron van landconflicten met lokale gemeenschappen met de bijbehorende geweldsuitbarstingen.

De handelaren in handelsgewassen spelen evenzeer een negatieve rol ten aanzien van moderne economische ontwikkeling van de Q'eqchi'es. Ze maken gebruik van de slechte infrastructuur en marktontwikkeling door zeer lage prijzen te berekenen voor de handelsgewassen van de Q'eqchi'es en door onderlinge prijsafspraken te maken.

Het leger heeft vooral begin jaren tachtig een zeer negatieve rol gespeeld door naar schatting honderd Q'eqchi' gemeenschappen met de grond gelijk te maken en tot op heden dwingt het een deel van de mannelijke bevolking in de regio een dag per week of tien dagen wacht te lopen. Ook de overheidsinstelling INTA, verantwoordelijk voor het uitgeven van landtitels, draagt de verantwoordelijkheid voor veel geweld in de regio en als zodanig remt het de economische modernisering van de Q'eqchi'es. INTA is verantwoordelijk voor veel corruptie, verwarring en onzekerheid met betrekking tot landtitels en voor landconflicten.

De twee belangrijkste staatsinstellingen op het gebied van landbouwvoorlichting zijn DIGESA en DIGESEPE. De eerste richt zich op de akkerbouw- en de tweede op veeteeltbevordering. Ze hebben tot doel moderne technologie over te dragen aan kleine en middelgrote boeren en beschikken over een relatief uitgebreid netwerk van voorlichters in de regio, maar de effecten van hun werk zijn zeer beperkt. Ze werken met een relatief klein aantal dorpen en binnen die dorpen met een klein aantal boeren. Na afloop van een project gaan de boeren zelden verder met het in praktijk brengen van de overgedragen kennis. Een belangrijk deel van de oorzaak hiervan ligt in het feit dat de voorlichters nauwelijks geïnteresseerd zijn in de economische strategieën van de Q'eqchi'es zelf waardoor het hen nauwelijks lukt om technologie aan te dragen die past in deze strategieën. Andere staatsinstellingen en semi-overheidsinstellingen op het gebied van agrarische promotie hebben nog minder effect. Er zijn maar weinig NGOs aanwezig in de regio.

De clerus die werkt volgens het concept van sacramentalistisch pastoraal werk, bevordert een onomwonden modern economisch scenario.

Deze priesters en religieuzen stimuleren de Q'eqchi'es om hun economische situatie te verbeteren en wel vooral via integratie in de markt en het overnemen van moderne technologie. Ze beheren een groot aantal kleine projecten op dit gebied. Een vergelijkbare stimulans vinden we bij evangelische kerken, maar zij hebben nauwelijks projecten aan te bieden.

Bevrijdend pastoraal werk zoekt naar een balans tussen premoderne en moderne elementen. De clerus die dit concept van pastoraal werk in de praktijk brengt, tracht de bestaande technologie van de Q'eqchi'es met externe technologie en methodes aan te vullen, richt zich uitsluitend op gemeenschapsprojecten, geeft juridische bijstand en bescherming aan gemeenschappen die in conflict met INTA of landeigenaren verkeren en roept op tot landhervorming.

De Q'eqchi'es gaan met hun economie op een zelfde manier om als met hun religie: ze articuleren premoderne met moderne elementen en nemen op een selectieve manier externe aspecten over om ze in te passen in hun eigen strategieën. Dit is ten eerste zichtbaar in het feit dat vrijwel alle huishoudens bereid zijn commerciële landbouw (modern) te bedrijven en niet-agrarische activiteiten (modern) te ontplooien op voorwaarde dat ze hun subsistentielandbouw (premodern) in grote lijnen kunnen voortzetten. De belangrijkste moderne activiteiten in dit verband zijn de verbouw en verkoop van koffie, rijst en kardemom, het houden en verkopen van enkele varkens of een koe en het verrichten van loonarbeid voor andere Q'eqchi'es of in de steden (zelden op de plantages). Ze zijn zeker bereid - en ten dele gedwongen - om dergelijke activiteiten aan te gaan, maar proberen steeds een groot deel van de produktie van maïs, bonen, Spaanse pepers en pluimvee (kalkoenen, kippen en eenden) voor eigen consumptie veilig te stellen.

Dit element van hun economische strategie hangt zeker samen met de wens om voor hun eerste levensbehoeften niet te afhankelijk te worden van marktgerichte activiteiten. Het komt ook voort uit het feit dat ze wat die levensbehoeften betreft niet afhankelijk willen worden van diegenen met wie ze te maken krijgen bij bijvoorbeeld de verkoop van handelsgewassen: niet-Q'eqchi'es waar ze over het algemeen geen vertrouwen in hebben. Daarnaast bestaat er ook een religieuze reden voor het reproduceren van hun subsistentielandbouw. In hun ogen worden voedsel, water, medicijnen en huisvesting veilig gesteld in hun relatie met de Tzuultaq'a. De Tzuultaq'a vraagt hen de betrokken produkten op zijn of haar huid te realiseren.

Een tweede element van de strategieën van de Q'eqchi'es dat een articulerend karakter draagt, wordt gevormd door de voorwaarden waarop ze externe technologie (modern) overnemen en ingaan op externe (moderne) projectvoorstellen. Een eerste vereiste is dat deze technologie hen niet te afhankelijk mag maken van niet-Q'eqchi'es. Dit bevestigt het premoderne verschijnsel dat in de relatie tussen Q'eqchi'es en bijvoorbeeld een landbouwvoorlichter de vraag of die voorlichter te vertrouwen is en tot welke

sociale groep hij of zij behoort in eerste instantie belangrijker is dan het praktische nut van wat die voorlichter aan te bieden heeft.

Een tweede vereiste is dat, als er al een relatie van vertrouwen in gecreëerd, de aangeboden technologie een basiselement van de strategieën of inheemse (premoderne) technologie en strategieën van de Q'eqchi'es moet ondersteunen. Een voorbeeld hiervan wordt gevormd door kunstmest. In de meeste dorpen wordt het gebruik ervan afgewezen omdat het duur is en het de Q'eqchi'es afhankelijk maakt van niet-Q'eqchi' handelaren. Kunstmest wordt gebruikt in gemeenschappen die dicht bij de weinige steden liggen, waarin de dorpelingen dus toegang hebben tot de daar functionerende lokale markt zonder afhankelijk te worden van een of enkele handelaren. Bovendien zijn dat dorpen waar de afzonderlijke huishoudens zeer weinig land tot hun beschikking hebben. Daar kunnen ze hun doelstelling om zelf een groot deel van hun voedsel te produceren alleen waarmaken door kunstmest te gebruiken.

Vervolgens moet externe technologie niet strijdig zijn met essentiële costumbre betekenissen die de Q'eqchi'es toekennen aan elementen van hun economische strategieën. Zo worden hybride maïszaden niet alleen afgewezen omdat deze zaden hen teveel afhankelijk zouden maken van niet-Q'eqchi' handelaren, maar ook vanwege het feit dat de adoptie van dergelijke zaden de logica van de verbouw van maïs in de relatie met de Tzuultaq'a zou verbreken. In die cyclische relatie is maïs afkomstig van de Tzuultaq'a die van de Q'eqchi'es verwacht dat ze deze zaden weer aan hem of haar teruggeven als zaad zodat hij of zij hen weer van een goede oogst kan voorzien. Bovendien wordt dit zaad als een 'persoon' opgevat die leven geeft, wat niet het geval is bij hybride zaden.

Een derde voorbeeld van articulatie wordt gepresenteerd door het feit dat de Q'eqchi'es zowel (premoderne) gemeenschappelijke als (moderne) individuele vormen van arbeid toepassen. Ze beschouwen arbeid soms als een intermenselijke relatie (premodern), soms als waar (modern). Over het algemeen geldt de regel dat de Q'eqchi'es bij economische activiteiten waarbij costumbre religie relevant is - hoofdzakelijk subsistentie-activiteiten - arbeid op een persoonlijke manier opvatten en gemeenschappelijke vormen van arbeid toepassen. Bij activiteiten waar die costumbre religie niet relevant is - marktgerichte landbouw en niet-agrarische activiteiten - vatten ze arbeid als een waar op, werken ze individueel en voorzien ze in de behoefte aan extra arbeid door loonarbeiders in te huren.

Zoals hierboven reeds aangegeven, is costumbre religie relevant wat betreft die activiteiten die in de subsistentiesfeer liggen. Die activiteiten dragen een religieus karakter in de zin dat ze een presentatie inhouden naar de Tzuultaq'a toe en het is de gemeenschap als geheel die zich op die momenten tot de Tzuultaq'a behoort te richten. Als de Q'eqchi'es hun maïs inzaaien doen ze dat altijd groepsgewijs waarbij de groep van vijftien tot twintig mannen de gehele gemeenschap representeert die zich tot de Tzuultaq'a richt.

Activiteiten die gericht zijn op verkoop, zoals de verbouw van koffie en kardemom, zijn niet relevant met betrekking tot de relatie met de Tzuultaq'a en vormen geen reden om costumbre rituelen te realiseren. Wat deze activiteiten betreft kan een moderne instrumentele en commerciële logica haar gang gaan. Ze worden altijd verricht op individuele basis en als de betrokken boer meer arbeid nodig heeft, huurt hij die in. Zo kan het gebeuren dat een Q'eqchi' die zijn buurman helpt bij het inzaaien van maïs daarvoor niet betaald krijgt terwijl als hij diezelfde buurman helpt bij het oogsten van diens koffie hij daar wel een loon voor ontvangt. Voor de Q'eqchi'es zijn dit onvergelijkbare activiteiten.

Een vierde voorbeeld van articulatie wordt gevormd door de mengeling van gemeenschappelijke (premoderne) en individuele (moderne) controle over land. Q'eqchi'es kennen vele varianten van landcontrole, maar meestal heeft het Comité voor Lokale Ontwikkeling, gekozen uit en door de leden van de gemeenschap, het beheer over gemeenschappelijke stukken land. Deze stukken land worden gebruikt om gewassen op te verbouwen, om vee te telen of om gemeenschapsgebouwen zoals kerken op te bouwen. Ook het land dat niet geschikt is voor landbouw, maar waar hout, gras en andere materialen vandaan worden gehaald en waarop gejaagd wordt, valt onder het beheer van het comité.

Het grootste deel van het land van een dorp is uitgegeven of toebedeeld aan individuele huishoudens. In veel dorpen, vooral in de recente vestigingsgebieden in het noorden en oosten, heeft het comité een gedeelde controle over deze individuele stukken land. Daar kan een huishouden zijn land niet verkopen aan een boer buiten het dorp zonder toestemming van het comité en het comité beslist bij onenigheid over land tussen de huishoudens.

Tot slot, de verschillende gemeenschappen vertonen een balans tussen enerzijds het streven van individuele huishoudens om de eigen situatie te verbeteren (modern) en anderzijds de verantwoordelijkheid van de gehele gemeenschap om degenen te helpen die lijden aan ziekte of die getroffen zijn door een slechte oogst (premodern). De gemeenschap stelt aan alle leden een stuk land ter beschikking, hoe klein ook.

Kortom, veel interveniërende instanties en actoren hebben een negatieve invloed op in het bijzonder de mogelijkheden voor de Q'eqchi'es om moderne economische activiteiten te ontwikkelen (grootgrondbezitters, handelaren, het leger, INTA). De moderne invloed van andere instanties zoals DIGESA en DIGESEPE en NGOs is zeer beperkt terwijl de invloed van kerken variabel is in premoderne en moderne zin. De invloed van deze instanties en actoren kan niet verhinderen dat de Q'eqchi'es premoderne en moderne, inheemse en exogene elementen articuleren in hun economische strategieën.

Conclusies

Deze analyse van de religie en economie van de Q'eqchi'es leidt tot de conclusie dat de verschillende elementen van beide aspecten van hun realiteit classificeerbaar zijn in de termen premodern, oorspronkelijk modern en contemporain modern. Sterker nog, deze drie termen verwijzen naar de kern van de problemen, thema's en dilemma's waar de Q'eqchi'es in hun religie en economie mee te maken hebben.

Daarmee is echter niet gezegd dat de Q'eqchi'es op weg zijn naar verdere modernisering in de zin van het inruilen van premoderne voor oorspronkelijk moderne of contemporain moderne elementen. Er zijn drie argumenten die pleiten tegen een dergelijk scenario. Ten eerste worden moderniteit en modernisering in de literatuur steeds meer opgevat als een geheel van paradoxen, dilemma's en problemen in plaats van een unilineaire ontwikkelingsgang.

Ten tweede, zowel wat betreft hun religie als hun economie oefenen interveniërende instanties en actoren geen onomwonden moderne invloed uit op de Q'eqchi'es. Bovendien zijn die instanties en actoren niet in staat om de Q'eqchi'es volledig hun wil op te leggen. De Q'eqchi'es behouden een weliswaar beperkte maar daarmee niet minder reële speelruimte om hun eigen keuzes te maken, hun eigen strategieën te bepalen, hun eigen voorstellingen te construeren en hun eigen praktijken te realiseren.

Ten derde, als het aan de Q'eqchi'es zelf ligt stevenen ze evenmin af op een onverbloemd moderne bestemming. Ze gaan met zowel hun religie als hun economie op een creoliserende manier om waarbij ze premoderne met moderne en inheemse met externe elementen combineren. Uit inheemse en externe bronnen putten ze op een selectieve manier zowel premoderne als moderne elementen die ze aanpassen aan hun behoeften om zo een eigen geheel aan religie en economische strategieën te construeren en uit te werken.

Modernisering en creolisering bepalen een groot deel van waar het in de religie en de economie van de Q'eqchi'es om draait. Modernisering moet dan worden opgevat als een geheel aan thema's, problemen, dilemma's en paradoxen die de agenda van de religie en economie van de Q'eqchi'es bepalen. Het begrip moet dan wel worden ontdaan van elk evolutionistisch perspectief. Het begrip creolisering karakteriseert de manier waarop de Q'eqchi'es omgaan met die thema's, problemen, dilemma's en paradoxen. Dit betekent dat de oorspronkelijke betekenis die Hannerz aan het begrip creolisering geeft[3], wordt opgerekt. Hij schrijft over creolisering in de zin van het vermengen van aspecten uit de inheemse cultuur met culturele aspecten die vanuit mondiale stromen op sociale actoren af komen. Ik zou willen zeggen dat creolisering niet alleen verwijst naar het vermengen of

[3]. Hannerz 1992: 261-267.

articuleren van endogene en exogene aspecten, maar ook van premoderne en moderne elementen. Daarmee gebruik ik het begrip in een ruimere dan alleen culturele zin. Het is ook bruikbaar als het gaat om economische strategieën, zoals we hierboven hebben gezien.

In het slothoofdstuk van dit boek zet ik niet alleen deze conclusies uiteen, het begrip creolisering werk ik verder uit. Allereerst relateer ik het begrip aan verschillende manieren van betekenisgeving. In navolging van de *connectionism* benadering binnen de cognitieve antropologie kan een verschil worden gemaakt tussen een associatieve of parallelle en een rationele of seriële manier van verwerken van impulsen en data door onze geest. Ik betoog hierbij dat de fundamenteel associatieve manier van betekenisgeving van de Q'eqchi'es een zeer gunstige uitwerking heeft op hun creoliserende manier van omgaan met hun religie en economie.

Vervolgens ga ik in op de sociale voorwaarden van creolisering. De identiteitsconstructies van de Q'eqchi'es werk ik verder uit waarbij het huishouden en de lokale gemeenschap naar voren komen als de fundamentele eenheden waarmee ze zich identificeren. Ondergeschikte identificaties vinden plaats met de Q'eqchi'es als groep met een eigen taal, costumbres en kleding, en met de kerk waartoe ze behoren. Ik betoog hierbij dat de Q'eqchi'es groot belang hechten aan het behouden van de relatieve autonomie van vooral hun lokale gemeenschap ten opzichte van degenen waarmee ze zich in eerste instantie niet identificeren: interveniërende instanties en actoren, waaronder vooral de staat. Het handhaven van die relatieve autonomie stelt hen in staat om hun creoliserende manier van omgaan met religie en economie te continueren. Daarmee neem ik afstand van Eric Wolf's concept van *closed corporate communities*. Q'eqchi' gemeenschappen zijn corporate, maar zeker niet closed ten opzichte van alle externe invloeden en elementen. Ik neem ook expliciet afstand van interpretaties zoals de cultureel imperialisme these. Hetzelfde geldt voor het dialectisch model waarbij bijvoorbeeld de religie en economie van de Q'eqchi'es worden geïnterpreteerd in termen van onderdrukking of manipulatie versus verzet of instemming. Dergelijke interpretaties doen geen recht aan de verschillende elementen die mijn analyse van de religie en economie van de Q'eqchi'es hebben voortgebracht.

Verder kom ik terug op het thema mondialisering en plaats het begrip creolisering in dit perspectief. Mondialisering houdt in dat er een steeds groter beroep zal worden gedaan op de creoliserende capaciteiten van sociale actoren om externe en nieuwe invloeden te verwerken, anderzijds biedt mondialisering nieuwe kansen en mogelijkheden voor bijvoorbeeld de Q'eqchi'es om de invloed van de staat verder te omzeilen door relaties - ook financiële - aan te gaan met instanties in andere delen van de wereld.

Tot slot, relativeer ik mijn eigen poging om een wetenschappelijk boek te schijven over de Q'eqchi'es dat aan rationele criteria moet voldoen. De Q'eqchi'es geven op een associatieve manier betekenis zonder zich sterk te bekommeren om interne tegenstrijdigheden binnen hun discoursen,

zonder eenduidige concepten te hanteren, zonder emoties en betekenissen te scheiden en zonder een poging te doen betekenissen en emoties los te koppelen van de concrete context waarbinnen zij relevant zijn, dus om gedecontextualiseerde kennis te produceren. Het schrijven van een wetenschappelijk boek noopt mij nu juist om precies dat allemaal te doen, wat dit boek een zeker vervreemdend karakter geeft. Maar gegeven het feit dat 'waarheid' en 'objectieve' kennis waarvan we 'zeker' kunnen zijn onmogelijk is, leidt het schrijven van een boek door een wetenschapper die betekenis geeft aan anderen die betekenis geven onontkoombaar tot een zekere vervreemding. Kennis is geldig tot nader orde en heeft haar prijs.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Hans Siebers was born in Wijchen, the Netherlands, on December 31, 1957. He entered the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1978. There he received his Bachelor's degree (in Dutch "kandidaats") in Contemporary History in May 1986 and his Master's degree (in Dutch "doctoraal") *cum laude* in Development Studies in June 1989. Between 1982 and 1988 he worked as a teaching assistant at the Third World Centre of the same university, where he was contracted as a junior researcher from January 1990 to April 1994.

His teaching record includes topics such as Culture and Development, Religion and Social Movements in Latin America, and Development Theory. His research work has been clustered in two major projects. The first focused on the economic, social, political and religious aspects of the pastoral work of the Catholic church in Guatemala. This research was conducted in Guatemala in 1987 and 1988 within the framework of a programme of the umbrella organization of Central American universities called *Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano* (CSUCA) at San José, Costa Rica. This programme took a comparative approach to similar issues in five Central American countries.

His second research project concentrated on religious, economic, educational and health care developments among the Q'eqchi' ethnic group in Guatemala seen from the perspectives of globalization and modernization. The fieldwork took place in 1991 and 1992 in cooperation with the Rafael Landívar University and the AVANCSO research institute in Guatemala City and the Department of Social Pastoral Work of the Bishopric of Verapaz in Cobán, Guatemala. This research laid the groundwork for his PhD thesis. In addition, both research projects have resulted in several books and articles.

Errata

- Page 8, line 9: ... globalization is something qualitatively **different from** modernity.

- Page 59, line 22: ... their relations with aj Kastii needs some qualifications.

- Page 65, line 6: ... learning many of the **skills** which their parents use ...

- Page 80, line 14: ... prevention **of** illness.

- Page 89, line 8: The concept of sacramentalist **pastoral work** in its ...

- Page 92, line 25: ... theological training, nor do they have ...

- Page 108, line 17: As I saw in ...

- Page 116, line 2: ... everyone within it.

- Page 117, line 30: ... in Esquipulas, nor of the political ...

- Page 123, line 10: ... Indian communities ...

- Page 123, line 12: ... mayejak for **their** gifts ...

- Page 124, line 26: ... or a neighbour to do it.

- Page 140, note 10: ... Christmas and Holy Week will **not** be discussed ...

- Page 159, line 16: Ideological consistency is **not** the Q'eqchi'es primary concern.

- Page 177, line 34: The Q'eqchi'es creative articulation points to the fact ...

- Page 222, line 7: ... the whole adult population is recruited ...

- Page 222, line 9: ... joins the man **or woman** of the household to do the work for the benefit of that household. The next day or occasion the same group joins the man **or woman** of another household.

- Page 269, line 23: ... of El Petén concentrates on the victims of ...

- Page 272, line 4: For example the positive impact ...

In the present globalizing world, social actors are increasingly confronted with flows of people, capital, goods, symbols, information and images stemming from distant corners of the globe. Faced with these flows they feel compelled to answer to new impulses, to rework their representations and practices, to redefine their identities and to modify their ways of dealing with the ever expanding outside world. The recent lively debate about processes of globalization and localization calls for a renewed attention to some of the central concepts of social sciences, in particular the meaning and role of modernity and modernization. Can these processes be understood in terms of such concepts and do they lead to an unambiguous (post-)modern, homogeneous world?

The *Q'eqchi'es*, about 600,000 people living in northern Guatemala, make up such a group of social actors who are increasingly immersed in global flows. While they live rather far from national and international communication centres and are renowned for the specificity of their cultural characteristics, they produce cash crops that are consumed in various parts of the world and global flows of religious meanings reach them through churches. This book asks whether the various aspects of the social reality of the Q'eqchi'es can be understood in terms of modernity or modernization and, if so, how they deal with these aspects. Are they trading in pre-modern for modern aspects and simply heading for a modern destiny?

After discussing the relevant conceptual framework and introducing the history and various aspects of the life-worlds of the Q'eqchi'es, this book deals primarily with their religion and economy. It pays attention to the religious and economic meanings and practices of intervening agencies and actors and to those of the Q'eqchi'es themselves. It assesses the value of the concepts of modernization and creolization in trying to understand the basic issues that are at stake in their religion and their economy.